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The Queen Entered (*see page 445*).

(From drawing by Frank T. Merrill.)

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

COMPLETE REVISED TRANSLATION, WITH INTRODUCTION AND CAST OF CHARACTERS BY

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

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INTRODUCTION.

1648–1649.

Twenty Years After is a sequel to *The Three Musketeers*, and has in turn a much longer sequel entitled *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*. For the exact periods covered by the three stories, the reader is referred to the introduction to *The Three Musketeers*. The series has been called the "D'Artagnan romances," since it depicts the lives and actions of D'Artagnan and his three musketeer comrades.

In *Twenty Years After* the four soldiers are brought together again after years of separation. The closing chapters of the *Musketeers* outline the causes for the separation: Athos had resumed the title of Comte de la Fère and had retired to his country estate. Porthos had "married money" and had been enabled thereby to purchase several properties giving him the imposing title of M. du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds. Aramis had entered a convent from which he emerged as the Abbé d'Herblay. D'Artagnan alone remained in service, nursing his lieutenancy in the musketeers, and becoming cynical over the fact that friends and masters alike had forgotten him.

The period is the turbulent time of the Fronde. Cardinal Mazarin has angered the nobles by his dominance of the situation. It is stated without contradiction that he has privately espoused Anne of Austria, the Queen-Regent. Louis XIV., the child, is still incapable of action, and other members of the royal house are either ignored or thrust into prison. The uprising is a vague expression of disaffection on the part of both citizens and nobles, not against the King but against the cardinal. The cardinal is in need of stout swords, be they never so few, to act personally for him in this crisis. Suddenly he

sees a man in the ante-chamber, D'Artagnan, and remembers having heard something of the prowess of that disappointed soldier. He sends D'Artagnan to enlist, if possible, the three ex-Musketeers. After much search (the story is an amusing one) they are discovered. But Athos has too much sympathy for the Frondeurs to fight against them. Aramis dissimulates, but D'Artagnan privately discovers that the abbé has for mistress Madame de Longueville, a sister of the Prince of Condé, and a rabid Frondeuse. Porthos alone is stirred, through the hope of affixing the title of Baron to his string of estates.

Beyond the narration of the deeds of the four friends the book is really nothing more nor less than a history of the Fronde. Every one of the leading characters played a part in it substantially as Dumas relates. He has succeeded in following the lines of history, and also in infusing a present and personal interest in the narration quite apart from the chronicles. The war of the Fronde will ever be known as one of the "comic-opera" contests of the world, where more ballads were hurled than bullets, and where the smiles of ladies stirred up quite as much enthusiasm as the standard of the King.

Then by swift transition Dumas shows us a more sinister struggle on the other side of the Channel, where the Ironsides of Cromwell overthrow the King of England. The two pictures stand out sharply by contrast — the one bright and merry with the figure of a young monarch reëntering his own; the other dark and dismal with the body of a king sinking down decapitated from a headsman's block.

We saw in *The Three Musketeers* how the plot presented three interwoven problematic threads. In this sequel we see a continuation of one of those threads; Milady is dead, but her son Mordaunt remains upon earth, a worthy descendant of her. Upon the heads of the four friends he has vowed an eternal revenge which they must needs unite against just as they united formerly against the hatred of Milady. In her case she found a powerful political protector in Richelieu. Her son is the direct agent of Cromwell. Dumas does the character of Cromwell an injustice by this alliance, in the same manner that he damned Richelieu by his treaty with Milady.

Since *Twenty Years After* is the middle chapter in the evolution of four lives, a brief comparative glance must be made at D'Artagnan and his friends. In respect to the Gascon we cannot do better than to quote from Dumas himself:

"D'Artagnan had been ready for opportunities; but circumstances had not been ready for him. So long as he was surrounded by his friends, he had revelled in his youth and his imagination. His was one of those fine and ingenuous minds that easily assimilate the qualities of others. Athos gave him his taste for splendor, Porthos his verve, Aramis his elegance; and if D'Artagnan had continued to live with these three men he would have become a superior character. First, Athos left him to take possession of a small estate that he had inherited near Blois; then Porthos left him to marry the solicitor's widow; last, Aramis, to take orders and to become an abbé. From that moment D'Artagnan, who seemed to have mixed up his future with that of his three friends, found himself isolated and weak, and without courage to follow a career in which he foresaw that he could gain no reputation, unless each of his friends should (if we may so speak) communicate to him a portion of that electric fluid which he had received from heaven. Therefore, although he had become a lieutenant of musketeers, D'Artagnan found himself still more isolated. He was not of sufficiently high birth, like Athos, to be admitted into the highest society, nor had he the vanity of Porthos, to make others believe that this was the case. He was not, like Aramis, sufficiently well-bred to maintain his natural elegance — an elegance derived from himself. . . . Of the two antagonistic natures making up D'Artagnan's individuality, the material one had gradually taken precedence. . . . Not that D'Artagnan had lost his original acuteness. . . . But he had applied this acuteness to the small, and not the great, purposes of life."

Such is the picture drawn of D'Artagnan at the beginning of the present story. Fortunately his shell of isolation is broken into. Events come to a head demanding an alert mind and a resolute arm. D'Artagnan intuitively grasps the situation. The stagnant forces of his nature throw themselves rapidly forward; and they come out of the rush and roar freshened and purified — for therein they have fused again with the sympathism of his reunited friends. The brief contact, though destined to be broken again, leaves him re-imbued with the traits that had been lacking, and again ready to follow out his destiny more unswervingly.

In sketching D'Artagnan, side-lights have been thrown upon the other three. Athos is living the quiet life of a country

gentleman, giving close attention to the training of his young son, Raoul. He emerges from his retirement to take part in the Fronde and in the closing scenes of Charles I.'s career. The hatred of Mordaunt, also, is an incitement to action. Always high-minded and noble, the strength of Athos' character nowhere appeals more strongly than in the incidents where, for the first time, the four friends find themselves arrayed against each other. Porthos has forsaken the hardships of a soldier's life and is revelling in luxurious idleness. But one great principle of his nature — vanity — urges him forward to renewed effort. And though the vanity is never concealed, it is veiled by such simple manliness and shrouded by such absolute self-forgetfulness as to become a positive charm. Aramis has entered the cloister, but is dreaming dreams — now of intrigues with fair women (he can never quite forget them), now of plots with princes who can reward him with bishoprics and even with cardinal's hats. Thus far, however, his personal plans have not seriously hampered his devotion to his friends, and his attitude is not absolutely distasteful. Nevertheless, great crises reveal the true character. In the episode where the four friends find themselves at swords' points, the real Aramis is disclosed by the same flash which shines upon Athos.

Mazarin's craftiness and niggardliness are not exaggerated by Dumas, if historians are to be believed. His character is, perhaps, drawn closer to life than was that of Richelieu. Another cleverly sketched figure is that of the Duc de Beaufort, whose escape from prison was effected almost exactly in the manner described. Still another evidence of verity on Dumas' part is the escapade of Madame de Chevreuse, in connection with the birth of Raoul, the incident being founded closely on fact. The reader makes the acquaintance, in this book, of three youthful personages, who are destined to play an important part "ten years later" — Raoul, Vicomte de Bragelonne, Louise de la Vallière, and Louis XIV.

It may be noted with some surprise that the "Four Inseparables" should be found fighting on opposite sides, both in the French Fronde and in the English Revolution. At first glance such a state of affairs would seem incompatible with their friendship. But Dumas uses the situation to demonstrate upon what broad lines a true friendship may really be based. Never has this noble theme been more nobly treated. Time

and space had apparently removed the tie uniting these souls in one bond of devotion. But once they are brought together again their hearts beat in unison. A wonderful climax is that where the four men, after twenty years of separation, find in the clash of a night combat their blows glancing harmlessly off an invincible adversary. Thrust and parry are given and returned futilely, till the moment when the surprised combatants behold themselves opposed each to him who had been friend and brother and comrade in arms in the former days. Then a new friendship is upreared upon the still solid foundations of the old, and the new affection is even more comprehensive than the old, since it can hold the four unalterably, even while ostensibly they might be found on opposite sides of a field of battle. Once the new alliance is made they become invincible again. Their arms which had been of little avail singly are now combined with positive strength enough to seize and hold a Mazarin while a queen is being dictated to. Still there is nothing sensational or strained in this renewed exhibition of strength. Events unfold themselves naturally. The four friends have united to form a machine of fate. Each part is capable of performing a certain task. D'Artagnan may plan all the details of escape from the cardinal's hunting pavilion, but it requires the strength of Porthos to wrest the bars from the windows. It is not strange, then, that the completed machine should have moved forward so irresistibly to the accomplishment of its ends. It is not strange that "Twenty Years After" the four soldiers of fortune should repeat the glorious performances of their youth.

J. WALKER MCSPADDEN.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA, Queen Regent of France.
ARAMIS, now Abbé d'Herblay.
ATHOS, Comte de la Fère.
BARTHOIS, DU, soldier.
BAZIN, valet to Aramis; beadle at Notre Dame.
BEAUFORT, DUC DE, grandson of Henri IV.; Frondeur.
BEAUMONT, MLLE. DE, of the court.
BEAUTIN, NOGENT, court jester.
BEAUVAIS, MME., of the court.
BELLIÈRE, DE, musketeer.
BÉRINGHEN, valet de chambre to the Queen.
BERNOUIN, valet to Cardinal Mazarin.
BLAISOIS, servant of Athos.
BLANCHET, lackey to Comte de Guiche.
BLANCMESNIL, President of the Parliament.
BOISJOLI, servant of Duc de Beaufort.
BOUILLON, DUC DE, Frondeur.
BRADSHAW, President of the English Tribunal.
BRAGELONNE, RAOUL, VICOMTE DE, son of Athos.
BRÉGY, MME. DE, of the court.
BRISSAC, DE, Frondeur.
BROUSSEL, councillor, Frondeur.
CAMBON, DE, musketeer.
CHANLEU, DE, Frondeur.
CHARLES I., King of England.
CHARLOT, servant of Athos.
CHARLOTTE, Princess, daughter of Charles I.
CHÂTILLON, DUC DE, of the royal troops.
CHAUPERROIS, servant of Abbé Scarron.
CHAVIGNY, M. DE, Governor of Vincennes Prison.
CHEVREUSE, DUC DE, Frondeur.

CHEVREUSE, DUCHESSE DE, wife of foregoing; Frond former confidante of Anne of Austria; also knov Marie Michon.
COISLIN, CHEVALIER DE, of the court.
COMMINGES, DE, Lieutenant of the Guards.
CONDÉ, LOUIS DE BOURBON, PRINCE DE, commanding the troops.
CONDÉ, PRINCESS DE, wife of foregoing.
CONTI, PRINCE DE, Frondeur.
CROMWELL, OLIVER, commander of English revoluti forces.
CURÉ of Béthune.
D'ARMINGES, tutor of Comte de Guiche.
D'ARTAGNAN, Lieutenant of the Musketeers.
D'AUBIGNÉ, MLLE. FRANÇOISE, afterwards Mme. Scarro Mme. de Maintenon, of the court.
D'ELBEUF, DUC, Frondeur.
D'ÉMERY, Superintendent of Finance.
D'HUMIÈRES, CHEVALIER, Frondeur.
D'ORLÉANS, GASTON, DUC, uncle of Louis XIV.
D'ORLÉANS, DUCHESSE, wife of foregoing.
EXECUTIONER of Béthune.
FAIRFAX, LADY, of the English court.
FIESQUE, COMTE DE, Frondeur.
FLAMARENS, DE, of the court.
FONTRAILLES, aide to Maréchal de Meilleraie.
FRIQUET, choir-boy at Notre Dame.
GLOUCESTER, HENRY, DUKE OF, son of Charles I.
GONDY, JEAN FRANÇOIS ABBÉ, DE, Coadjutor; after Cardinal de Retz.
GRAMMONT, MARÉCHAL DE, of the royal troops.
GRIMAUD, servant of Athos.
GROSLOW, CAPTAIN, of Cromwell's army.
GUICHE, COMTE DE, of the royal troops.
GUITAUT, DE, officer of the guards.
HARRISON, COLONEL, of Cromwell's army.
HENRIETTA, Queen of England.
HENRIETTA, PRINCESS, daughter of Charles I.
JUXON, BISHOP, confessor to Charles I.
LA BRUYÈRE, soldier.
LAIGUES, MARQUIS DE, Frondeur.
LAPORTE, of the King's household.

La Ramée, officer at Vincennes prison.
La Vallière, Mlle. Louise de, daughter of Mme. Saint-Remy.
Leven, Earl of, of the Scottish army.
Lillebonde, De, musketeer.
Longueville, Duc de, Frondeur.
Longueville, Duchesse de, wife of foregoing; Frondeuse.
Louis XIV., King of France.
Louvières, Frondeur.
Luynes, De, Frondeur.
Mademoiselle, La Grande, daughter of the Duc d'Orléans.
Maillard, mendicant; formerly known as Bonacieux.
Marcillac, Prince de, Frondeur.
Mazarin, Giulio (Jules), Cardinal, Prime Minister of France.
Meilleraie, Maréchal de la, of the court.
Ménage, of Parisian society.
Montrésor, Comte de, Frondeur.
Mordaunt (John Francis de Winter), son of Milady; of Cromwell's army.
Mothe, Maréchal de la, Frondeur.
Motteville, Mme. de, of the court.
Mousqueton, or Mouston, servant of Porthos.
Nanette, Dame, servant of Broussel.
Noirmont, steward to Duc de Beaufort.
Noirmoutiers, Marquis de, Frondeur.
Olivain, lackey to Vicomte de Bragelonne.
Parry, valet to Charles I.
Patrick, English sailor.
Paulet, Mlle., of Parisian society.
Perez, M., landlord of Bedford's tavern.
Planchet, former lackey to D'Artagnan, now grocer.
Poins, De, officer at Vincennes.
Porthos, successively M. du Vallon, de Bracieux, de Pierrefonds.
Rivière, Abbé de la, of the court.
Rochefort, Comte de, Frondeur.
Saint-Laurent, De, of the Queen's Guards.
Saint-Remy, Mme. De, of the Duchesse d'Orléans' household.
Scarron, Abbé, a pensioner, of Parisian society.
Scudéry, De, of Parisian society.
Scudéry, Mme. de, wife of foregoing.

Scudéry, Mlle. de, daughter of foregoing.
Séguier, Chancellor, of the court.
Sévigné, Marquis de, Frondeur.
Socratine, Mlle., of the court.
Tomlinson, Colonel, of Cromwell's army.
Tony, servant of Lord de Winter.
Tremblay, De, Governor of the Bastille.
Turquaine, Madeline, landlady to D'Artagnan.
Urbain, lackey to Comte de Guiche.
Verger, Du, musketeer.
Villequier, Marquis de, Captain of the Guards.
Villeroy, Maréchal de, of the court.
Vitry, Marquis de, Frondeur.
Winter, Lord de, of the English court.

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TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHADE OF RICHELIEU.

In a room of the Palais Cardinal, with which we are already acquainted, near a gilt-cornered table covered with papers and books, was sitting a man with his hands supporting his head.

Behind him was an enormous fireplace, red with fire, the burning brands of which were crumbling on large gilded and-irons. The firelight fell on the back of this thinker's splendid garment, which was at the same time illumined in front by a candelabrum filled with wax candles.

At the sight of that red robe and those rich laces, of that pale brow furrowed by thought, of the solitude of that cabinet, the silence of the antechambers, and the measured steps of the Guards in the corridor, one might have imagined that the shade of the Cardinal Richelieu was still in the room.

Alas! it was indeed only the shade of that great man. France enfeebled, the King's authority disregarded, the nobles grown overweening and turbulent, the enemy within the frontiers, — everything went to prove that Richelieu was no longer there.

But what proved, even more than all this, that the red robe was not the old Cardinal's was that solitude which, as we have said, was like a phantom's rather than a living being's. It was shown by the corridors without courtiers, the courts full of Guards, — the sentiment of mockery arising from the street and penetrating through the windows into this chamber, which was shaken by the breath of a whole city leagued against the minister, — lastly, by the distant sound of incessant firing, happily without object or results, but merely to show the Guards and Swiss, the Musketeers and soldiers surrounding the Palais Royal (for even the Palais Cardinal had changed its name), that the people also had arms.

This shade of Richelieu was Mazarin.

Mazarin was now alone, and he felt that he was weak.

"Foreigner!" he murmured — "Italian! That is the reproach they cast at me! With that word they assassinated and hanged and destroyed Concini; and, if I allowed them, they would in like manner assassinate and hang and destroy me; though I have never done them any other harm than to oppress them a little. The fools! They do not perceive that their enemy is not this Italian, who speaks bad French, but rather those who have the talent to make fine speeches to them with such a pure Parisian accent. Yes, yes," continued the minister, with his shrewd smile, which now appeared strange on his pale lips, — "yes, your murmurs declare that the lot of favourites is precarious. But if you know that, you ought also to know that I am not a common favourite. The Earl of Essex had a splendid ring, enriched with diamonds, which his royal mistress gave him. I have only a plain ring, with a cipher and a date; but this ring has been blessed in the chapel of the Palais Royal.[1] Therefore, they shall not destroy me at their pleasure. They do not perceive that, with their eternal cry of 'Down with Mazarin!' I make them sometimes cry, 'Long live M. de Beaufort,' sometimes 'Long live the Prince,' and sometimes 'Success to the Parliament.' Very well! M. de Beaufort is at Vincennes; the Prince will join him there, some day or other; and the Parliament" —

Here the Cardinal's smile assumed an expression of which his mild countenance appeared incapable.

"Well, the Parliament — we will see what we shall do with it. We have Orléans and Montargis. Oh! I will give it time enough; but those who have begun with crying 'Down with Mazarin' will finish by crying 'Down with all those gentry,' every one in his turn. Richelieu, whom they hated while he was living, and of whom they are always talking now that he is dead, was lower than I am; for he was frequently driven from power, and still more frequently feared that he should be. The Queen will never discard me; and if I am obliged to give in to the people, she will yield with me. If I fly, she will fly also; and then we shall see what these rebels will do without their Queen or their King. Oh! if only I was not a foreigner! If only I was a Frenchman! If only I was a gentleman!"

And he relapsed into meditation.

---

[1] It is well known that Mazarin, having taken none of the orders that prevent marriage, had privately espoused Anne of Austria.

In truth, his position was extremely difficult, and the day which had just passed had much increased it. Mazarin, always spurred on by his sordid avarice, was overwhelming the people with taxes; and this people, with nothing left but their lives (which, as the Attorney-General Talon said, could not be sold by auction), — this people, whom they were trying to calm by the rumour of victories won, from the laurels of which no nutritious food could be obtained, — this people had long since begun to murmur.

But this was not all. For when it is only the common people that complain, the Court, kept at a distance from them by the barrier of richer citizens and the gentry, never hears of it. But Mazarin had been so imprudent as to defy the magistrates. He had sold a dozen appointments as maîtres de requètes; and as these officers paid very dear for their commissions, and as the addition of these new members would lower the emoluments of the others, they had united, and sworn on the Gospels that they would not submit to this augmentation of their number, and that they would resist all the persecutions of the Court, — mutually agreeing that, if any one of them should lose his office through this rebellion, the rest would subscribe and make up his loss.

Now this is what these two parties had brought about:

On the seventh of January, seven or eight hundred merchants of Paris had assembled and protested against a new tax which the Government wished to impose on house-owners; and they had deputed ten of their number to lay their grievance before the Duc d'Orléans, who, according to his old habits, courted popularity. The Duc d'Orléans had received them, and they had assured him that they were determined not to pay this new tax, even if they were obliged to defend themselves by force against the King's officers, who might attempt to collect it. The Duc d'Orléans had listened to them with great complaisance, had given them reason to hope for some remission, had promised to speak to the Queen in their favour, and had dismissed them with the ordinary expression of princes — "We will see."

On their side, on the ninth, the maîtres de requètes had gone to the Cardinal; and one of them, who spoke for the others, had talked to him with such boldness and resolution that the Cardinal was quite astonished. He had therefore dismissed them, saying ,as the Duc d'Orléans had said, — "We will *see.*"

Then, in order *to see*, they had assembled the Council, and had sent for D'Émery, the superintendent of finances.

This D'Émery was greatly detested by the people; first, because he was the superintendent of finances, and every superintendent of finances ought to be detested; and then, it must be confessed, because he somewhat deserved to be.

He was the son of a Lyons banker, who was named Particelli, and who, having changed his name after becoming bankrupt, caused himself to be called D'Émery.[1] The Cardinal de Richelieu, who had discovered great financial talents in him, had introduced him to Louis XIII. under the name of M. d'Émery, and, as he wished him to be appointed superintendent of the finances, he spoke very highly of him.

"Excellent!" the King replied. "I am very glad that you have spoken to me of M. d'Émery for this place, which requires an honest man. I was told that you would propose that rascal Particelli, and I feared that you would oblige me to take him."

"Sire," replied the Cardinal, "your Majesty may make yourself perfectly easy; the Particelli of whom you speak was hanged!"

"So much the better," answered the King. "So it is not for nothing that I am called Louis the Just." And he signed the nomination of M. d'Émery.

It was this same D'Émery who had become the superintendent of finances.

The minister had sent for him, and he hastened to the palace, pale and frightened, declaring that his son had, that very day, narrowly escaped assassination in the Place du Palais. The mob had met him, and had blamed him for the extravagance of his wife, who had an apartment hung with red velvet with gold fringes. She was the daughter of Nicholas Le Camus, who became secretary to the King in 1617, coming to Paris with twenty livres and, after reserving forty thousand livres income for himself, had just divided nine millions amongst his children.

D'Émery's son had been nearly smothered, one of the rioters having proposed to squeeze him until he had disgorged the gold which he had swallowed. The Council determined nothing that day; the superintendent being too much occupied with that event to have his head very clear.

[1] And yet the Attorney-General, Omer Talon, always called him M. Particelli, in accordance with the custom of the time in Frenchifying foreign names.

The next day, the first president, Mathieu Molé, whose courage in all these affairs, says the Cardinal de Retz, equalled that of the Duc de Beaufort and the Prince de Condé, that is to say, of the two men who were considered the bravest in France, — the next day the first president had been attacked in his turn. The people threatened to inflict upon him the evils which were inflicted on themselves. But the first president had replied with his accustomed calmness, without being either disturbed or surprised, that if the rioters did not obey the King's wishes, he would have gallows erected in all the squares, to hang incontinently the most mutinous among them. To which they had answered that they desired nothing more than that gallows should be prepared, as they would serve to hang the unrighteous judges who purchased the favour of the Court at the price of the people's poverty.

Nor was this all. On the eleventh, the Queen, going to Mass at Notre Dame, as she did regularly every Saturday, had been followed by more than two hundred women, crying out and demanding justice. They had not, however, any evil intentions, only wishing to throw themselves on their knees before her, to endeavour to excite her pity. But the Guards prevented them; and the Queen passed by haughty and stern, without heeding their clamours.

In the afternoon another Council was held, and then it was determined to uphold the King's authority, and, in consequence, the Parliament was convoked for the next day, the twelfth.

On this day, during the evening of which we are beginning our new history, the King, then ten years old, and just recovered from the small-pox, had, on the pretence of going to return thanks for his recovery at Notre Dame, mustered his Guards, his Swiss and Musketeers, who were stationed round the Palais Royal, on the Quais and the Pont Neuf; and after having heard Mass, he had proceeded to the Parliament, where, a court of judicature being suddenly held, he had not only maintained the edicts that had been passed, but had also enacted five or six new ones; "each one," says the Cardinal de Retz, "more destructive than the other." So that the first president, who, as we have seen, was on the former sittings in favour of the Court, boldly inveighed against this mode of bringing the King to the palace, unduly to influence their votes.

But the president, Blancmesnil, and the councillor, Broussel, were those who spoke the most forcibly against the new taxes.

The edicts being passed, the King returned to the Palais Royal. A vast multitude was collected on his route; but as it was known that he came from the Parliament, and it was uncertain whether he had been there to render justice to the people or to oppress them anew, not one single exclamation of joy broke forth to congratulate him on his recovery. On the contrary, every countenance was sullen and disturbed — some were even threatening.

Notwithstanding the King's return, the troops remained drawn up. They feared that some disturbance might break out when the result of this sitting of the Parliament was known. In fact, scarcely had the rumour been spread abroad that, instead of lightening the imposts, the King had increased them, before groups were formed, and the streets resounded with cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Long live Broussel!" "Long live Blancmesnil!" For the people had heard that Broussel and Blancmesnil had spoken in their favour, and they were not the less grateful for their eloquence, although it had proved futile.

Efforts had been made to disperse these groups, and to silence these cries; but, as always happens in such cases, the groups had increased and the cries redoubled. The order had just been given to the Royal and Swiss Guards, not only to keep firm, but to establish patrols in the Rue St. Denis and the Rue St. Martin, where the mobs appeared to be the most numerous and animated, when the provost was announced at the Palais Royal.

He was instantly admitted, and announced that unless these hostile demonstrations were immediately ended, in two hours all Paris would be in arms.

They were deliberating on what was to be done, when Comminges, a lieutenant in the Guards, entered, with his dress torn and his face covered with blood. On seeing him thus enter, the Queen uttered a cry of surprise, and demanded the cause.

He informed them that on the appearance of the Guards as the provost had foreseen, the minds of the people had become exasperated. They had taken possession of the bells, and sounded the tocsin. Comminges had kept his ground, had arrested a man who appeared to be a ringleader, and, to make an example, had ordered him to be hanged at the Croix du Trahoir. The soldiers dragged him away to execute this com

mand; but at the market-place, they were attacked with stones and halberds; and the rebel, taking advantage of this, had made his escape, gained the Rue des Lombards, and had there thrown himself into a house, of which the doors had been immediately forced.

This violence, however, had been fruitless, as they had not been able to find the culprit. Comminges had left a detachment in the street, and, with the remainder of his forces, had returned to the Palais Royal, to give the Queen an account of what was going on. During his whole progress he had been followed by cries and threats; several of his men had been wounded by stones and halberds; and he himself had been struck by a stone which had cut open his eyebrow.

Comminges's story corroborated the provost's opinion. They were not in a situation to make head against a serious revolt; and so the Cardinal caused intelligence to be spread among the people that the troops were only drawn up on the Quais and the Pont Neuf on account of the ceremony, and were to be withdrawn immediately. In fact, about four o'clock in the afternoon they were all concentrated round the Palais Royal. One detachment was established at the Barrier des Sergents; another at Quinze-Vingts; and a third at the hill of St. Roch. The courts and the ground floor were filled with Swiss and Musketeers, and it was resolved to await the result.

This, then, was the state of affairs when we introduced our readers into the Cardinal Mazarin's cabinet, which had formerly been Cardinal Richelieu's. We have seen the state of mind in which he listened to the people's murmurs which penetrated even to his ears, and to the gunshots which resounded even in his chamber.

Suddenly he raised his head, with a slight frown on his brow, like a man who has made his decision, and fixing his eye on an enormous clock, which was just about to strike six, he took up a silver whistle, which was placed within his reach on the table, and blew it twice.

A concealed door in the tapestry opened noiselessly and a man, dressed in black, softly entered the room and stood behind the Cardinal's easy-chair.

"Bernouin," said the Cardinal, without even turning his head, — for having whistled twice, he knew it must be his *valet de chambre*, — "what Musketeers are on guard at the palace?"

"The Black Musketeers, monsignor!"

"What company?"

"Company of Tréville."

"Is there any officer of that company in the antechamber?"

"Lieutenant D'Artagnan."

"A good officer, I believe?"

"Yes, monsignor."

"Give me a Musketeer's uniform and help me to dress."

The valet left the room as softly as he had entered it, and returned a moment after, bringing the dress required.

The Cardinal then, silent and pensive, began to divest himself of the ceremonial garb which he had worn at the sitting of the Parliament, and to put on the military coat, which, owing to his former campaigns in Italy, he wore with some ease. Then, when he was completely dressed, he said—

"Go and find M. d'Artagnan."

And the valet this time left the room by the middle door, but as quiet and mute as ever. One would have said that he was a ghost.

When he was left alone, the Cardinal looked at himself in a mirror with some satisfaction. He was still young, for he was scarcely forty-six years old. He was of an elegant figure, rather above the common height. His complexion was good; his eyes full of fire; the nose large, but well proportioned; the forehead broad and majestic; his hair was chestnut and slightly curling; the beard was darker than his hair, and well curled and graceful. Then he complacently put on his belt, and looked at his hands: they were very handsome, and he took the greatest care of them. Then putting aside the large military gloves of buckskin which he had already taken, he selected a pair of simple silk ones.

At this moment the door opened.

"M. d'Artagnan," said the valet.

An officer entered.

He was a man of about thirty-nine or forty years of age; not tall, but well proportioned, though thin; his eye quick and full of animation; his beard black and his hair slightly gray, as is always the case when any one has lived too well or not well enough, and more especially when a man is of a very brown complexion.

D'Artagnan took four steps into the cabinet, which he recognised as that where he had once visited Richelieu; and now

seeing no one in it but a Musketeer in the dress of his own company, he fixed his eyes on this individual, and at the first glance he recognised the Cardinal under the uniform.

He remained standing in a respectful but dignified attitude, and as became a man who in the course of his life had often found himself in the presence of the great.

The Cardinal fixed on him an eye more keen than profound, studied him attentively, and then, after a few moments' silence, said —

"You are M. d'Artagnan, I believe?"

"I am, monsignor," replied the officer.

The Cardinal looked yet a moment longer at that head, so expressive of intelligence, at that animated face, the extreme vivacity of which had been somewhat calmed by years and experience. But D'Artagnan bore the examination like a man who had before been scrutinized by eyes far more piercing than those whose investigation he now sustained.

"Sir," said the Cardinal, "you will come with me; or, rather, I am going with you."

"I am at your service, monsignor," replied D'Artagnan.

"I wish personally to visit the posts surrounding the Palais Royal. Do you believe that there will be any danger in it?"

"Danger, monsignor!" exclaimed D'Artagnan in astonishment; "and of what?"

"The people are reported to be mutinous."

"The uniform of the King's Musketeers is much respected, monsignor; and even if it were not so, I, with three of my men, would engage to put to flight a hundred of these clowns."

"And yet you have seen what happened to Comminges?"

"M. Comminges belongs to the Guards, not to the Musketeers," said D'Artagnan.

"You mean," replied the Cardinal, smiling, "that the Musketeers are better soldiers than the Guards."

"Every one has a prejudice in favour of his own uniform, monsignor."

"Except myself, sir," replied Mazarin, smiling; "for you see that I have left off my own to assume yours."

"Ah, monsignor!" said D'Artagnan, "that is modesty. As for me, I declare that had I that of your Eminence, I should remain contented with it, and I would agree, if need were, never to wear any other."

"Yes, but to go out with it this evening, it might not perhaps be quite so safe. Bernouin, my hat."

The valet returned, bearing a broad-brim uniform hat. The Cardinal put it on in a jaunty manner, and turning to D'Artagnan —

"You have horses saddled in the stables, have you not?"

"Yes, monsignor."

"Well, then, let us go."

"How many men does monsignor wish me to take?"

"You have said that four men of you would engage to put a hundred of these clowns to flight; therefore, as we might perchance meet two hundred, take eight."

"As monsignor pleases."

"I follow you. But by the way, not that way," continued the Cardinal. "Give us light, Bernouin."

The valet brought a candle, the Cardinal took a small key from his desk, and having opened the door of a secret staircase, they soon found themselves in the courtyard of the Palais Royal.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT ROUND.

TEN minutes afterward the little troop left the palace by the Rue des Bons-Enfants, behind the theatre which the Cardinal de Richelieu had built for the performance of his play of "Mirame," and in which the Cardinal Mazarin — a greater lover of music than of literature — had just had brought on the stage the first operas ever represented in France.

The aspect of the city showed every characteristic of extreme agitation. Numerous groups of men were running through the streets; and when they saw the soldiers pass, they stopped, in spite of what D'Artagnan had said, with an air of threatening mockery that indicated that the citizens had for the time laid aside their usual quietude for more warlike sentiments. From time to time sounds were heard from the direction of the market-place; gunshots cracked in the Rue St. Denis; and now and then suddenly, without any obvious cause, a bell began to ring, set in motion by the popular caprice.

D'Artagnan pursued his course with the indifference of a

an uninfluenced by such fooleries. When a crowd occupied ne middle of the street, he pushed his horse through it without saying a warning word; and as if those who were assembled, whether rebels or not, knew the kind of man they had to deal with, they gave way and allowed the patrol to pass on. The Cardinal envied this coolness, which he attributed to familiarity with danger; but, at the same time, he accorded to the officer, under whose charge he had for the time placed himself, that sort of consideration which even prudence itself pays to heedless courage.

On approaching the post at the Barrier des Sergents, the sentinel cried out:

"Who goes there?"

D'Artagnan answered, and, having asked the password of the Cardinal, went forward. The passwords were "*Louis*" and "*Rocroy.*"

After the exchange of these signals, D'Artagnan inquired whether M. de Comminges did not command this post. The sentinel pointed to an officer on foot, resting his hand on the neck of the horse of another individual, with whom he was conversing. It was he for whom D'Artagnan inquired.

"There is M. de Comminges," said D'Artagnan, returning to the Cardinal.

The Cardinal directed his horse toward them, while D'Artagnan discreetly retired. Yet, by the way in which the two officers took off their hats, he perceived that they had at once recognised his Eminence.

"Bravo, Guitaut!" said the Cardinal to the horseman. "I perceive that, in spite of your sixty-four years, you are always the same — ever on the alert and full of devotion. What were you saying to this young man?"

"Monsignor," replied Guitaut, "I was remarking to him that we live at a singular period, and that this day much resembled one of those days of the league which I heard so much about in my youth. Do you know that they actually talked of erecting barricades in the Rue St. Denis and the Rue St. Martin?"

"And what did Comminges answer, my dear Guitaut?"

"Monsignor," said Comminges, "I answered that to make a league one thing was wanting, which appeared to me very essential, and that was a Duc de Guise. Besides, the same thing is seldom done twice."

"No; but they will make a Fronde, as they call it," said Guitaut.

"And what is a Fronde?" asked Mazarin.

"It is the name that they give to their party, monsignor."

"And whence does this name arise?"

"It seems that, some days ago, the Councillor Bachaumont said, at the palace, that these rioters resembled the school boys who sling stones in the moats of Paris, and scatter when they see the policeman, and come back again when he is gone by. They caught up this word as the beggars at Brussels did; and they have called themselves *frondeurs*. Yesterday and to-day, everything is *à la Fronde* — loaves of bread, gloves, fans, muffs, and — there! Listen now!"

As this moment, in fact, a window was thrown open; a man stood in it and began to sing:

"A breeze of the Fronde
Did this morning begin;
It roared and it groaned
Against Mazarin —
That breeze of the Fronde
The morning brought in!"

"The insolent rascal!" murmured Guitaut.

"Monsignor," said Comminges, whose wound had put him into a bad humour, and who was anxious to take his revenge, "shall I send a ball at that scoundrel, to teach him not to sing so out of tune another time?" And he reached towards the holsters on his uncle's horse.

"No, no!" exclaimed Mazarin. "*Diavolo!* My dear friend, you will spoil everything. On the contrary, things are proceeding marvellously well. I understand you Frenchmen as well as if I had made you, from the first to the last. They are singing — they will pay. At the time of the league, of which Guitaut was just now speaking, they sang nothing but the Mass. Come, Guitaut, come, let us go and see if they keep as good a lookout at Quinze-Vingts as they do at the Barrier des Sergents."

And saluting Comminges with his hand, he rejoined D'Artagnan, who again put himself at the head of his small troop, and was followed by Guitaut and the Cardinal, who were in turn followed by the rest of the escort.

"That is true," murmured Comminges, looking at the Car-

dinal's retreating figure. "I forgot that provided they pay, it will be quite sufficient for him."

They resumed their course down the Rue St. Honoré, making their way through groups of men, who were talking of nothing else but the edicts passed that day, and complaining of the young King who was ruining his people without knowing it. They attributed all their distress to Mazarin; spoke of applying to the Duc d'Orléans and the Prince, and lauded Blancmesnil and Broussel.

D'Artagnan passed through the midst of these crowds as it he and his horse had been composed of iron. Mazarin and Guitaut conversed in a low tone; and the Musketeers, who had at last recognised the Cardinal, followed in silence.

They reached the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre, where was the post of Quinze-Vingts. Guitaut called a subaltern, who came to make his report.

"Well?" demanded Guitaut.

"Ah, captain," said the officer, "everything is going on well in this quarter, except that I fancy something is taking place in that hôtel."

And he pointed to a magnificent mansion, situated on the very spot where the Vaudeville was afterwards erected.

"Why, that is the Hôtel Rambouillet," said Guitaut.

"I do not know whether it be the Hôtel Rambouillet," replied the officer; "but this I know, that I have seen a great many persons of very sorry appearance go into it."

"Pshaw!" said Guitaut, laughing heartily; "they are poets."

"If that is so, Guitaut," said Mazarin, "I will thank you not to speak so irreverently of these gentlemen. Do you not know that I also was a poet in my youth, and made verses in the same style as those of M. de Benserade?"

"You, monsignor?"

"Yes, I. Would you like me to recite some of them to you?"

"I thank you, monsignor, but I do not understand Italian."

"Yes; but you understand French, do you not, my good and worthy Guitaut?" replied Mazarin, placing his hand in a friendly manner on his shoulder; "and whatever order is given you in that language, you will execute it?"

"Without doubt, monsignor, as I have hitherto done — provided it comes to me from the Queen."

"Ah, yes," said Mazarin, biting his lips; "I know t you are wholly devoted to her."

"I have been captain of her Guards for more than twe years."

"Forward, M. d'Artagnan!" cried the Cardinal. "Eve thing is going on well in this quarter."

D'Artagnan took the head of the column without utterin word, and with the passive obedience characteristic of an soldier.

He proceeded towards the mound of St. Roch, where w the third post, passing through the Rue Richelieu and the R Villedo. It was the most solitary station, for it almost touch upon the ramparts, and the city was not thickly peopled that direction.

"Who commands this post?" asked the Cardinal.

"Villequier," replied Guitaut.

"The deuce!" said Mazarin. "Speak to him alone, th You know that we are at swords' point ever since you receiv the order to arrest the Duc de Beaufort. He claimed that t honour belonged to him, as captain of the Guards."

"I know it well, and I have told him a hundred times t he was wrong. The King could not have given him the ord for at that time his Majesty was only four years old."

"True; but I could have given it to him, Guitaut; ye preferred you."

Guitaut, without replying, pushed his horse forward, a making himself known to the sentinel, ordered him summon M. de Villequier, who instantly made his appe ance.

"Ah! Is it you, Guitaut?" he said, in that ill-natured t which was habitual with him. "What the devil do you w here?"

"I come to ask you if there is any news in this quarter."

"And what news would you expect here? They are sho ing, 'Long live the King' and 'Down with Mazarin!' T is nothing new; we have been accustomed to these cries some time."

"And you join in chorus?" replied Guitaut, laughing.

"Faith, I have sometimes a great inclination to do I think that they are quite right, Guitaut. I would willin give five years of my pay, which, by the way, I have n't ceived, to make the King five years older."

"Indeed! And what would happen if the King were five years older?"

"Why, the moment the King came to his majority, he would give his own orders; and there would be much more pleasure in obeying the grandson of Henry IV. than the son of Pietro Mazarini. For the King — death and the devil! I would die with pleasure; but if I were killed for Mazarin, as your nephew almost was to-day, the best place in Paradise would never console me for it."

"Well, well, M. de Villequier," said Mazarin, "make yourself easy; I will apprise the King of your devotion to him." Then turning towards the escort:

"Come, gentlemen," continued he, "all is going on well. Let us return."

"And so Mazarin was there!" said Villequier. "So much the better. I have long wished to tell him a bit of my mind. You have given me an opportunity, Guitaut; and although your motives were not perhaps the very best, still I thank you for it."

And turning on his heels, he entered the guard-house, whistling a Fronde air.

Mazarin, however, returned very pensive. What he had successively heard from Comminges, Guitaut, and Villequier confirmed his opinion that in case of any serious disturbance, he had no one to depend on but the Queen; and even the Queen had so often abandoned her friends that, in spite of all the precautions he had taken, her support sometimes appeared to the minister very uncertain and precarious.

During the whole of this nocturnal expedition, — that is say, for about an hour, while he in turn studied Guitaut, minges, and Villequier, — the Cardinal had really been e ing one man. This man, who had remained perfectly before the threats of the populace, and whose fa changed a muscle at the jokes which Mazarin h uttered, any more than at those of which he was this man appeared to him to be a distinct be and formed for such events as were then pas especially for such as were about to happen

Besides, the name of D'Artagnan was not to him, and although Mazarin had not con about the year 1634 or 1635, — that is to s years after the events which we recounted i

keteers," — it seemed to the Cardinal as if he had heard D'Artagnan mentioned as a man who, in some half-forgotten affair, had made himself conspicuous as a model of courage, address, and devotion.

This idea had taken such complete possession of his mind that he was determined to satisfy himself concerning it without delay; but the information which he desired must not be sought from D'Artagnan himself. The few words he had spoken had revealed to the Cardinal his Gascon origin; and the Italians and Gascons knew each other too well, and are too much alike, to apply to one another for information concerning themselves. Therefore, on reaching the walls that enclosed the garden of the Palais Royal, the Cardinal rapped at a small door situated on nearly the same spot as where the Café de Foy now stands, and, after having thanked D'Artagnan and requested him to await him in the court of the Palais Royal, he made a sign to Guitaut to follow him. They both dismounted, and throwing their bridles to the lacquey who had opened the door, they disappeared in the garden.

"My dear Guitaut," said the Cardinal, leaning on the Guard-captain's arm, "you told me just now that you had been twenty years in the Queen's service."

"Yes, it is true," replied Guitaut.

Now, my dear Guitaut," continued the Cardinal, "I have ed that, besides your courage, which is indisputable, fidelity, which is incorruptible, you have an excellent

e remarked *that*, monsignor," said the captain of

"The deuce! So much the worse for me."

?"

e of the best qualifications of a courtier is to t."

t a courtier, Guitaut; you are a brave ke one of those of the time of Henry IV., main, and of whom, unfortunately, very t."

! Have you brought me here to draw

laughing. "I have brought you here erved our lieutenant of Musketeers?"

ve no occasion to observe him, monsignor; I have known
a long time."
l, then, what sort of a man is he?"
y," said Guitaut, surprised at the question, "he is a
,

, I know that; but I wanted to ask you whether he is
› be trusted."
le Tréville much esteems him; and M. de Tréville, you
a staunch friend of the Queen's."
anted to know whether he is a man who has been
'—
ou mean as a brave soldier, I think I may say yes. At
e of La Rochelle, at Suze, and at Perpignan I have
ıat he did more than his duty."
you know, Guitaut, that we poor ministers have often
men who are something more than brave. We want
tact. Was not M. d'Artagnan mixed up in some
, in the time of the Cardinal, from which report says
cated himself most skilfully?"
to that matter, monsignor," replied Guitaut, who saw
that the Cardinal wished to draw him out, "I am
to tell your Eminence that it is impossible for me to
hat public rumour has taught you. For my own part,
ıave taken part in any intrigues; and if I ever received
rmation concerning the intrigues of others, as the secret
ıine your Eminence will excuse me if I keep it for
ho confided it to me."
in shook his head.
" said he, "upon my word, there are some ministers
e enough to learn all they wish to know."
ısignor, that is because those ministers do not weigh all
he same scale; and because they apply to men of the
oncerning war, and to men of intrigue for affairs of
Apply to some intriguer of the period you mention
will easily gain the information you require — that is
f you pay for it."
pardieu!" replied Mazarin, making a peculiar grimace
lways escaped him when any one touched upon the
of money in the sense in which Guitaut had mentioned
, it will be paid for — if there are no other means of
g it."

"And does monsignor seriously wish me to point out a m who has mingled in all the cabals of that period?"

"*Per Bacco!*" replied Mazarin, who began to lose h temper; "for a whole hour I have been asking you nothi else, iron-head that you are!"

"There is one for whom I can answer in that respect; th is to say, provided he will speak."

"That is my affair."

"Ah, monsignor, it is not always so easy to make people s what they do not wish to say."

"Pshaw! With patience it can be managed. Well, no this man is" —

"The Comte de Rochefort."

"Ah! the Comte de Rochefort?"

"Unfortunately, he disappeared four or five years ago, a I do not know what has become of him."

"I know, Guitaut," said Mazarin.

"Then why did your Eminence complain just now that y knew nothing?"

"And," said Mazarin, "you believe that Rochefort" —

"He was the Cardinal's tool, monsignor; but I warn y that it will cost you dear. The Cardinal was very generous his creatures."

"Yes, yes, Guitaut," replied Mazarin; "he was a gre man, but he had that fault. Thank you, Guitaut. I will ta advantage of your advice, and that this very evening."

And as they had now reached the courtyard of the Pal Royal, the Cardinal saluted Guitaut with a wave of his han and seeing an officer walking up and down, he joined him. was D'Artagnan, who was waiting, as the Cardinal had co manded him.

"Come, M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, in his most melo ous voice; "I have an order to give you."

D'Artagnan bowed, followed the Cardinal up the sec staircase, and soon found himself in the same cabinet when he had set out.

The Cardinal sat down at his desk and took a sheet paper, on which he wrote some lines.

D'Artagnan, standing immovable, waited without im tience, as without curiosity. He had become a military auto aton, acting, or rather obeying, as if by a spring.

The Cardinal folded the letter and sealed it.

"M. d'Artagnan," said he, "you will take this despatch to the Bastille, and bring back the person whom it concerns. You will take with you a carriage and an escort, and will carefully guard the prisoner."

D'Artagnan took the letter, put his hand to his hat, turned round on his heels just as the most skilful drill-sergeant would have done, and left the room; and a moment after he was heard, in his curt, monotonous voice, giving this command: "An escort of four men, a carriage, my horse!"

Five minutes later, the sound of a carriage with the clatter of the iron hoofs of horses was heard on the pavement of the court.

CHAPTER III.

TWO OLD ENEMIES.

D'Artagnan reached the Bastille as half-past eight struck. He sent his name up to the governor, who, when he knew that he came with a direct order from the Cardinal, advanced even to the steps to meet him.

M. de Tremblay was then governor of the Bastille. He was the brother of the famous Capucin Joseph, that terrible favourite of Richelieu, who was styled his Gray Eminence.

When the Marshal Bassompierre was in the Bastille, where he remained for upwards of twelve years, and when his companions, in their dreams of liberty, would say one to another, "As for me, I shall get out at such a time," and "I at such a time," Bassompierre replied, "And I, gentlemen, shall go out when M. de Tremblay goes out." By which he meant that when Richelieu died, M. de Tremblay would not fail to lose his place at the Bastille, and Bassompierre to resume his at Court.

His prediction had nearly been fulfilled, but in a very different manner from what Bassompierre had expected; for, after the Cardinal's death, contrary to all expectation, affairs went on as before. M. de Tremblay did not go out, and Bassompierre was very near not going out too.

M. de Tremblay was therefore still governor of the Bastille when D'Artagnan presented himself there to execute the Cardinal's order. He received him with the greatest polite-

ness, and, as he was just going to sit down at table, he invited D'Artagnan to sup with him.

"I would do so with the greatest pleasure," said D'Artagnan; "but, if I am not mistaken, it says on the envelope of the despatch, 'In great haste.'"

"That is true," said M. de Tremblay. "Hallo there! major, bring down number 256."

On entering the Bastille you ceased to be a man, and you became a number.

D'Artagnan felt cold shivers at the jingle of the keys. He therefore remained on horseback without caring to dismount, looking at the bars, the deep-sunk windows, and the enormous walls, which he had never before seen except from the other side of the moats, and which had caused him so much fear some twenty years before.

A bell sounded.

"I must leave you," said M. de Tremblay; "I am called to sign the order for the prisoner's departure. May we soon meet again, M. d'Artagnan!"

"May the devil make away with me if I respond to your wish!" muttered D'Artagnan, accompanying his imprecation with his most gracious smile. "I am quite ill with remaining only five minutes in the court. Come, come, I see that I would yet prefer dying on straw, of which there is some probability, to having an income of ten thousand livres as governor of the Bastille."

He had scarcely finished this soliloquy when the prisoner made his appearance. On seeing him, D'Artagnan made a motion of surprise, which he immediately suppressed. The prisoner entered the carriage without appearing to have recognised D'Artagnan.

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan to his four Musketeers, "I was ordered to keep the strictest watch over the prisoner. Therefore, as the carriage has no locks on its doors I shall get into it with him. M. de Lillebonde, will you be so obliging as to lead my horse by the bridle?"

"Willingly, lieutenant," replied the Musketeer he addressed.

D'Artagnan dismounted, gave his horse's bridle to the Musketeer, entered the carriage, took his place near the prisoner, and, in a tone of voice in which it was impossible to discover the slightest emotion, said, "To the palace, full speed."

Instantly the carriage started, and D'Artagnan, taking advantage of the darkness of the arch under which they were passing, threw his arms round the prisoner's neck, exclaiming, "Rochefort! Is it really you? I am not mistaken!"

"D'Artagnan!" cried Rochefort, in his turn much astonished.

"Ah! my poor friend," continued D'Artagnan, "not having seen you for four or five years, I thought you were dead."

"Faith," said Rochefort, "there is not much difference, I imagine, between a dead man and one who is buried. And I am buried, or what amounts to the same thing."

"And for what crime are you in the Bastille?"

"Do you wish me to tell you the truth?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I do not know."

"What, do you doubt me, Rochefort?"

"No, on the honour of a gentleman; for it is impossible that I can be there for the cause alleged."

"What cause?"

"As a night robber."

"You a night robber, Rochefort! You are jesting?"

"I imagine this requires some explanation — does it not?"

"Yes, I confess it does."

"Well, then, this is what happened. One evening, after an orgy at Reinard's, at the Tuileries, with the Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, De Rieux, and others, the Duc d'Harcourt proposed that we should go and pull off cloaks on the Pont Neuf; that is, you know, an amusement which the Duc d'Orléans brought into fashion."

"And were you crazy, Rochefort, — at your age?"

"No; but I was drunk. And yet as the amusement appeared to me to be mighty tame I proposed to the Chevalier de Rieux that we should be spectators rather than actors, and, that we might view the spectacle from the first tier of boxes, that we should mount the Bronze Horse. No sooner said than done! Thanks to the spurs, which served as stirrups, in a moment we were mounted on the crupper; we were capitally placed and saw charmingly. Four or five cloaks had been pulled off with unequalled dexterity, and without those from whom they had been taken having dared to say a word; when some idiot not so patient as the others bethought himself of calling for the guard, and draws on us a patrol of archers. The Duc d'Harcourt, Fontrailles, and the others escape. De Rieux wishes to do

the same ; but I hold him back, saying that they would not sp us out where we were. He would not listen to me, but plac his foot on the spur to descend. The spur gives way ; he fal and breaks his leg, and, instead of remaining quiet, cries ou like a hanged dog. I wished to jump down, in my turn ; bu it was now too late, and I jumped into the arms of the archer who carry me to the Châtelet, where I slept on this curse wine, quite certain that I should be set at liberty the next da But day after day elapsed, then a week, then I wrote to th Cardinal. The same day they came and took me to the Bastill where I have now been these five years. Do you believe th is for having committed the sacrilege of mounting behin Henry IV.? "

"No ; you are right, my dear Rochefort ; it cannot be fo that. But probably you are now going to learn the cause."

"Ah, yes ; for I had forgotten to inquire where you ar taking me."

"To the Cardinal."

"What does he want with me ? "

"I have not the least idea ; for I did not even know that i was you for whom I was sent."

"Impossible. You, a favourite."

"I a favourite ! " exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Ah ! my poo Count, I am more a Gascon volunteer than I was when I fir saw you at Meung — now full twenty-two years ago. Alas!

And a deep sigh finished this exclamation.

"And yet you came here with a command ? "

"Merely because I happened by chance to be in the ant chamber, and the Cardinal applied to me, as he would hav done to any other. But I am still only a lieutenant of Mu keteers ; and I have now been so about one-and-twenty year if I calculate properly."

"But, after all, no misfortune has befallen you ; which saying much."

"And what misfortune would you have happen to me ? A some Latin verse says,— which I have forgotten, or, rathe which I never knew correctly,— the thunder never strikes th valley, my dear Rochefort ; and I am one of the lowest in th world."

"Therefore the Mazarin is still Mazarin ? "

"More than ever, my dear friend. They say that he is ma ried to the Queen."

"Married?"

"If he is not her husband, he is most assuredly her favoured lover."

"What! Resist a Buckingham and yield to a Mazarin!"

"Like a woman," replied D'Artagnan philosophically.

"Yes, a woman — but a queen?"

"Great heavens! In that respect, queens are women twice over."

"And is M. de Beaufort still in prison?"

"Yes; and why do you inquire?" said D'Artagnan.

"Because as he was well disposed toward me he might have got me out of this scrape."

"You are probably nearer freedom than he is; so you must get him out."

"Then, the war?" said Rochefort.

"We are going to have it."

"With the Spaniard?"

"No, with Paris," replied D'Artagnan.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you hear those shots?"

"Yes; and what of it?"

"Well, the citizens are throwing the balls about before the game begins."

"And do you think that anything could be done with these citizens?" inquired Rochefort.

"Why, yes; there's promise, and if they had a chief who would unite all these scattered groups"—

"It is unfortunate not to be free."

"Ah, now, do not despond. If Mazarin has sent for you, he must want you for something; and if he really wants you — well, then I congratulate you. No one has wanted me for many a year; and you see my present position."

"Make your complaint, then; that's my advice."

"Listen, then, Rochefort: a bargain"—

"What is it?"

"You know that we are good friends?"

"Yes, by Jove! I carry the marks of our friendship — three sword wounds!"

"Well, then, should you get into favour, don't forget me."

"On the faith of Rochefort! But on condition that you do the same for me in return."

"Agreed, and here 's my hand. Therefore, the first opportunity you have of speaking for me" —

"I will speak. And you?"

"I will do the same."

"And, by the way, your friends — must I speak for them also?"

"What friends?"

"Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Why, have you forgotten them?"

"Almost."

"What has become of them?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"Indeed!"

"Ah, yes! You know that we separated. They live; and that is all I can say. From time to time I hear of them indirectly; but in what part of the world they are, the plague take me if I know; and, on my honor, Rochefort, you are now my only friend."

"And the illustrious — what did you call the lad whom I made a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont?"

"Planchet?"

"Yes, that is it — and what has become of the illustrious Planchet?"

"Well, he married a pastry-cook's shop in the Rue des Lombards. He is a lad who always loved sweets; so that he is now a citizen of Paris, and, in all probability, he is now one of the rioters. You will see that the rascal will be a sheriff before I am a captain."

"Come, my dear D'Artagnan, a little courage. It is when one is at the very bottom of the wheel that it turns and raises you up. From this very evening, perhaps, your lot will change."

"Amen!" said D'Artagnan, stopping the carriage.

"What are you doing?" demanded Rochefort.

"We are nearing our destination, and I do not wish to be seen getting out of the carriage — we do not know each other."

"You are right. Adieu."

"Au revoir. Remember your promise."

And, remounting his horse, D'Artagnan resumed his place at the head of the escort. Five minutes later they entered the court of the Palais Royal.

D'Artagnan conducted his prisoner by the grand staircase

through the antechamber and corridor. Having reached the door of Mazarin's cabinet, he was about to announce himself, when Rochefort put his hand upon his shoulder.

"D'Artagnan," said he, smiling, "shall I confess something of which I was thinking all along our route as I saw the crowds through whom we passed, and who were looking at you and your four men with flaming eyes?"

"Speak," said D'Artagnan.

"It was that I had only to cry for help, to have you and your four men torn to pieces, and then I should have been free."

"And why did you not do it?" said D'Artagnan.

"Come, now," said Rochefort, "sworn friendship. Ah! if it had been any other than you I, do not say" —

D'Artagnan held down his head. "Has Rochefort become better than I am?" he asked himself.

And he sent their names in to the minister.

"Show in M. de Rochefort," said the impatient voice of Mazarin, as soon as he had heard the two names mentioned; "and request M. d'Artagnan to wait. I have not yet done with him."

These words much delighted d'Artagnan. As he had said, it was a long time since any one had wanted him, and this urgency on the part of Mazarin was a good omen.

It had no other effect on Rochefort than that of putting him completely on his guard. He entered the cabinet and found Mazarin seated at a table, in his ordinary dress; that is to say, as monsignor. It was much the same as the dress of the abbés of the time, except that he wore a violet mantle and stockings.

The doors were closed. Rochefort looked at Mazarin out of the corner of his eye and caught a glance from the minister which crossed his own.

The minister was unchanged — well combed, well curled, and well perfumed; and by reason of his foppery did not appear near his real age. With Rochefort it was quite another thing; the five years he had passed in prison had greatly changed the appearance of this worthy friend of Richelieu. His black hair had become perfectly white; and the bronzed and hardy color of his complexion had given place to a pallor which looked like that of exhaustion. On seeing him Mazarin shook his head imperceptibly, as much as to say, There is a man who no longer appears to be *good* for much.

After a pause, which was, in reality, sufficiently long, but which appeared an age to Rochefort, Mazarin took an open letter from a bundle of papers, and showing it to him, said:

"I have found a letter from you, M. de Rochefort, demanding your liberty. So you are in prison, are you?"

Rochefort started at this question.

"Why," said he, "it seemed to me that your Eminence knew that better than any one else."

"I? Not at all. There are crowds of prisoners in the Bastille who have been there since the time of M. de Richelieu, and whose names I do not even know."

"Oh, monsignor; but it is quite another thing as far as it concerns me. And you knew of mine, since it was by an order of your Eminence that I was transferred from the Châtelet to the Bastille."

"Do you think so?"

"I am certain of it."

"Yes; I think I remember it now. Did you not refuse to go to Brussels for the Queen?"

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Rochefort; "so there is the true cause, after all. Fool that I am! I have been seeking for it these five years and could not discover it."

"But I do not say that that was the cause of your arrest. Let us understand each other properly. I ask you the question — that is all. Did you not refuse to go to Brussels on the Queen's service, although you had before gone there for the late Cardinal?"

"It was precisely because I had gone for the Cardinal that I could not go there for the Queen. I had been to Brussels under very terrible circumstances. It was at the time of Chalais's conspiracy. I had been there to discover his correspondence with the Archduke; and even then, when I was recognised, I narrowly escaped being torn to pieces. How, then, could you expect me to return there? I should have ruined the Queen instead of serving her."

"Well, you may now understand, my dear M. de Rochefort, how the best intentions may be misinterpreted. The Queen saw, in your denial, only a pure and simple refusal; and besides, her Majesty the Queen had had much cause for complaint against you, under the late Cardinal."

Rochefort smiled contemptuously.

"*It was* precisely because I had faithfully served Cardinal

Richelieu against the Queen that, when he was dead, you ought to have comprehended, monsignor, that I would have served you faithfully against all the world."

"Me? M. de Rochefort!" said Mazarin; "me! I am not like M. de Richelieu, who aimed at omnipotence. I am a plain minister, who do not stand in need of followers or servants, being myself the servant of the Queen. Now, her Majesty is very susceptible; she must have heard of your refusal, and knowing that you were a superior and, consequently, a dangerous man, my dear M. de Rochefort, she must have ordered me to make sure of you. That is the way in which you got into the Bastille."

"Well, then, monsignor," said Rochefort, "it appears to me that if I am in the Bastille through mistake" —

"Yes, yes," replied Mazarin, "certainly; all that can be managed. You are the man to comprehend certain affairs, and, when these affairs are once understood, to push them forward."

"That was Cardinal Richelieu's opinion, and my admiration for that great man is increased when I hear you saying that it is yours also."

"It is true," replied Mazarin, "the Cardinal was a great politician; in that consisted his vast superiority over myself, who am a plain, straightforward being. That is what injures me. I have a frankness that is quite French."

Rochefort bit his lips to keep from smiling.

"I come, therefore, to my object. I need some good friends, some faithful servants. When I say that I need, I mean — the Queen wants them. I do nothing except by the Queen's command — do you understand? It is not like Cardinal de Richelieu, who did everything according to his own caprice; therefore, I shall never be a great man like him; but, instead of it, I am a good man, M. de Rochefort; and I hope that I shall convince you of it."

Rochefort knew that silky voice, with which, from time to time, a hissing like a viper's was mingled.

"I am quite ready to believe you, monsignor," said he; "though, for my part, I have had but few proofs of that goodness of which your Eminence has spoken. Do not forget, monsignor," continued Rochefort, seeing the movement which the minister endeavoured to check, — "do not forget that I have been five years in the Bastille, and that nothing distorts the ideas so much as looking at things through prison bars."

"Ah, M. de Rochefort, I have already told you that I ha nothing to do with your imprisonment. The Queen — th anger of a woman and a princess — what would you have But it passes as it comes, and afterwards one thinks no mor about it. —"

"I can conceive, monsignor, that she thinks no more abou it — she, who has passed these five years at the Palais Roya in the midst of entertainments and courtiers; but I, who hav passed them in the Bastille"—

"Oh, my God! my dear M. de Rochefort, do you imagin that the Palais Royal is such a very gay abode? No, indeed we have had great disturbance here, I assure you. But let us not talk any more about that. I play with all my cards on the table, as I always do. Are you one of us, M. de Rochefort?'

"You ought to comprehend, monsignor, that I ask for noth ing better. But I know nothing of what is going on. In the Bastille we talk politics only with soldiers and jailers, and you have no idea, monsignor, how little such men know of what is passing. I agree with M. de Bassompierre — is he still one of the seventeen noblemen?"

"He is dead, sir, and it is a great loss. He was devoted to the Queen, and such men are rare."

"Parbleu! and I can well believe it," said Rochefort. "And when you have them, you send them to the Bastille."

"But, after all, what proves devotion?" inquired Mazarin.

"Action," said Rochefort.

"Ah, yes, action," replied the minister, reflecting. "But where are men of action to be found?"

Rochefort shook his head.

"There is never any lack of them, monsignor; but you do not search properly for them."

"I do not search properly? What do you mean, my dear M. de Rochefort? Tell me — you must have learnt much during your intimacy with monsignor, the late Cardinal. Ah! he was a great man."

"Will monsignor be angry if I preach to him?"

"I? Not at all. You know very well that men may say anything to me. I endeavour to make myself loved, not feared."

"Well, then, there is a proverb, written on the wall of my dungeon with a 'nail.'"

"And what is this proverb?" asked the Cardinal.

"This is it, monsignor: *Like master*"—

"I know it: *like valet*" —

"No; *like follower*. It is a slight change, which the devoted men, of whom I was just now speaking, made for their own private satisfaction."

"Well; and what does this proverb signify?"

"It signifies that Richelieu succeeded in finding faithful servants, and by dozens."

"He! — the aim and object of every dagger! He! — who passed his whole life in warding off the blows that were struck at him!"

"But, after all, he did ward them off, and yet they were roughly given. It was because, if he had real enemies, he had also real friends."

"And that is all I require."

"I have known men," continued Rochefort, who thought that now was the time to keep his promise to D'Artagnan, — "I have known men who by their skill have a hundred times evaded all the Cardinal's penetration, and by their courage conquered his guards and spies, — men who, without money, or support, or credit, kept the crown on a crowned head, and made the Cardinal sue for pardon."

"But these men," said the Cardinal, delighted at seeing Rochefort coming to the very point to which he wished to lead him, — "these men of whom you speak were not devoted to the Cardinal, since they opposed him!"

"No, or they would have been better rewarded; but they had the misfortune to be devoted to that same Queen for whom you were just now requiring followers."

"But how can you know all these things?"

"I know them because at that time these men were my enemies — because they were contending against me — because I did them all the harm I could, and they paid me back as far as they could — because one of them, with whom I was more especially engaged, gave me a sword wound about seven years ago; it was the third that I had received from the same hand — the settlement of an old account."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, with wonderful good-nature; "if I only knew such men as those!"

"Well, monsignor, you have had one at your door more than six years, and all that time have not considered him good for anything."

"Who, pray?"

"M. d'Artagnan."

"That Gascon!" exclaimed Mazarin, with well-feigned astonishment.

"That Gascon saved a Queen, and made Richelieu confess that in point of skill and political address he was but a novice to him."

"Indeed!"

"It is precisely as I have the honour to inform your Excellency."

"Tell me something about it, my dear M. de Rochefort."

"That is a mighty difficult thing, monsignor," said the gentleman, smiling.

"He will tell it me himself, then."

"I doubt it, monsignor."

"And why so?"

"Because the secret is not his own — because, as I have told you, it is the secret of a great Queen."

"And was he alone in accomplishing such an enterprise?"

"No, monsignor; he had three friends, three gallant men who seconded him — such men as you were seeking for just now."

"And those four men were united, do you say?"

"As if the four had made but one man — as if those four hearts had beat in one bosom. Therefore, what did they not do — those four!"

"My dear M. de Rochefort, you really excite my curiosity to the last degree. Could you not tell me this history?"

"No; but I can narrate a story to you — a real fairy tale, monsignor, I assure you."

"Oh, do tell it me, M. de Rochefort! I am very fond of tales."

"You wish for it, then, monsignor?" said Rochefort, endeavouring to detect some motive in the expression of that keen and crafty face.

"Yes."

"Well, then, listen. There was once a queen — a very powerful queen — the queen of one of the mightiest kingdoms in the world — against whom a great minister had conceived a violent hatred, because he had before been too favourably inclined toward her. Do not endeavour, monsignor, to find out who — you could never guess. All this happened a long time

before you came into the country where this queen reigned. Now, there came to this court an embassador, so brave, so rich, and so elegant that all the women became mad; and the queen herself, no doubt as a memorial of the manner in which he had managed the affairs of State, had the imprudence to give him an ornament so remarkable that it could not be replaced. As this ornament was a present from the king, the minister persuaded him to insist upon the queen wearing it at an approaching ball. It is unnecessary to tell you, monsignor, that the minister knew for certain that this ornament had accompanied the ambassador, which ambassador was far distant on the other side of the sea. The great queen was lost — ruined — like the lowest of her subjects; for she would have inevitably fallen from the very pinnacle of her grandeur."

"Really!" said Mazarin.

"Well then, monsignor, four men determined to save her. These four men were not princes, they were not dukes, they were not men of power, they were not even men of wealth: they were four soldiers, of most intrepid courage, strong arms, and great skill at the sword. They departed. The minister knew of their departure, and had posted men on their road to prevent the accomplishment of their object. Three of the four were disabled by numerous assailants; and one alone reached the harbour, having killed or wounded those who attempted to stop him, passed the sea, and brought back the ornament to the great queen, who was able to attach it to her shoulder on the day appointed; and thus nearly overthrew the minister. What do you think of that stroke, monsignor?"

"It was splendid!" said Mazarin, meditating.

"And I know ten quite equal to it."

Mazarin did not speak; he was thinking.

"Have you anything more to ask me, monsignor?" said Rochefort.

"Yes. And you say that M. d'Artagnan was one of those four men?"

"Yes; he was at the head of the whole enterprise."

"And who were the others?"

"Monsignor, permit me to leave to M. d'Artagnan himself the task of giving their names. They were his friends, not mine. He alone can have any influence over them; and I do not even know them by their real names."

"You dis*trust me, M. de* Rochefort. Well, I will be frank

with you to the end. I have need of you — of him; in short, of all."

"Begin with me, monsignor, since you sent for me and I am here; then you can pass on to the others. You cannot be surprised at my curiosity; when a man has been for five years in prison, he is naturally anxious to know where he is going to be sent."

"You, my dear M. de Rochefort, will have a confidential appointment. You will go to Vincennes, where M. de Beaufort is a prisoner, and you will keep your eye on him. Well, now, what is the trouble?"

"Why, the trouble is that you propose an impossibility," said Rochefort, shaking his head with an air of disappointment.

"How! An impossibility? And why so?"

"Because M. de Beaufort is one of my friends; or, rather, I am one of his. Have you forgotten, monsignor, that M. de Beaufort was responsible for me to the Queen?"

"M. de Beaufort has since become the enemy of the State."

"That may possibly be the case, monsignor; but, as I am neither King, nor Queen, nor minister, he is not my enemy, and I cannot accept what you offer me."

"This is what you term your devotion, is it? I congratulate you. Your devotion does not carry you too far, M. de Rochefort."

"And besides, monsignor, you will understand that to leave the Bastille to go to Vincennes is only changing one's prison."

"Say at once that you are of M. de Beaufort's party, and you will then be more candid."

"Monsignor, I have been so long imprisoned that I belong only to one party, and that is the party of the free and open air of heaven. Employ me in any other way — send me on a mission — give me active occupation; but, if possible, let it be outdoors."

"My dear M. de Rochefort," said Mazarin, with his bantering air, "your zeal carries you too far. Because your heart is good, you imagine yourself still a young man; but your strength would fail you. Believe me, what you now want is repose. Hallo, there, some one!"

"You therefore make no determination concerning me, monsignor?"

"On the contrary, I have determined."

Bernouin entered.

"Call an officer," said Mazarin; "and remain in the room," he added, in a low voice.

An officer entered. Mazarin wrote a few words, which he gave to the man, and then bowed. "Adieu, M. de Rochefort," said he.

Rochefort bowed respectfully. "I perceive, monsignor," said he, "that I am going back to the Bastille."

"You have a quick intelligence."

"I return there, monsignor; but, I repeat, you are wrong in not employing me."

"You! the friend of my enemies."

"What would you have? You should have made me the enemy of your enemies."

"And do you think that there is no one but yourself, M. de Rochefort? Believe me, I can find plenty of much greater value."

"I wish you may, monsignor."

"Very well. Go, go! But, by the by, it is quite useless to write me any more letters, M. de Rochefort. They would be entirely wasted."

"I have drawn the chestnuts from the fire," muttered Rochefort, as he left the room; "and if D'Artagnan is not satisfied with the eulogium I have just passed upon him, he is mighty difficult. But where the plague are they taking me?"

In fact, they led him back by the little staircase, instead of passing through the antechamber, where D'Artagnan was waiting. In the court he found his carriage and the four guards of his escort; but he looked in vain for his friend.

"Ah, ha!" said Rochefort to himself, "this makes an awful change in affairs; and if there should be still the same number of people in the streets — well, we will endeavour to prove to Mazarin that we are still, thank God, worth something better than to guard a prisoner."

And he jumped into the carriage as lightly as if he had been only twenty-five years old.

CHAPTER IV.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA AT FORTY-SIX.

MAZARIN, when alone with Bernouin, remained pensive fo a moment or two. He knew a good deal, and yet he did nc know quite enough. He was a regular cheat at play; that i a fact which Brienne has preserved for us. He called i taking a fair advantage. He therefore resolved not to forr any engagement with D'Artagnan until he knew all his adve sary's cards.

"Has monsignor any commands?" inquired Bernouin.

"Yes," replied Mazarin; "give me a light; I am going t the Queen."

Bernouin took a candle and led the way.

There was a secret passage that led from Mazarin's apar ments and his cabinet to those of the Queen, and it was by thi passage that Mazarin went, at all hours, to Anne of Austria.[1]

On reaching the bed-chamber, into which this passage opened Bernouin met Madame Beauvais. Madame Beauvais and Be nouin were the two confidants of these superannuated amours and Madame Beauvais undertook to announce the Cardinal t Anne of Austria, who was in her oratory with the youn King, Louis XIV.

Anne of Austria, seated in a large easy-chair, with he elbow resting on a table and her head supported by her hanc was looking at the royal child, who, stretched upon the ca pet, was turning over a large book of battles. Anne of Au tria was a queen who was tired of State ceremony; and sh often remained for hours shut up in her chamber or her ora tory, without either reading or praying.

The book with which the King was amusing himself was Quintus Curtius, enriched with engravings representing th great actions of Alexander.

Madame Beauvais appeared at the door of the oratory an announced the Cardinal de Mazarin.

The child raised himself on one knee, frowning; and look ing at his mother, he said, "Why does he come in this man ner, without demanding an audience?"

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[1] The secret passage by which the Cardinal went to the Queen-mother may still l seen at the Palais Royal. — *Memoirs of the Princess Palatine.*

The Queen blushed slightly.

"It is necessary," she replied, "in the times in which we live, that the Prime Minister should have the privilege of coming at any hour to give the Queen an account of what is passing, without exciting the curiosity of the whole Court."

"But I do not think that M. de Richelieu came in this manner," answered the incorrigible child.

"And what do you remember about M. de Richelieu? You can know nothing about him; you were too young."

"I do not remember it myself, but I have inquired, and have been told so."

"And who has told you this?" replied Anne of Austria, with an ill-disguised movement of anger.

"I know that I must never name the persons who answer my questions," replied the child, "or I shall obtain no more information."

At that moment Mazarin made his appearance. The King rose, took his book, shut it, and laid it on the table; he remained standing by it, that he might oblige Mazarin also to stand.

This scene did not escape Mazarin's intelligent eye, and he endeavoured to conjecture what had preceded it. He bowed respectfully to the Queen, and made a profound reverence to the King, who nodded haughtily enough. But a glance from his mother reproached him for thus indulging the hatred which Louis XIV. had, from his earliest youth, cherished toward the Cardinal; and he received the minister's compliments with a smile on his lips.

Anne of Austria tried to divine, from the expression of the Cardinal's features, the cause of this unexpected visit, for he seldom came until all had withdrawn.

The minister made an almost imperceptible sign with his head. Then the Queen, addressing Madame Beauvais, said, "It is time for the King to go to bed. Call Laporte."

The Queen had two or three times before told young Louis to go to bed, and the child had always, in a caressing manner, insisted on remaining up a little longer; but this time he made no observation: he only bit his lips and grew pale. A moment after Laporte entered; and the child went straight up to him, without kissing his mother.

"Why, Louis!" said Anne, "why do you not kiss me?"

"I thought you were angry with me, madame, as you drive me away."

"I do not drive you away. But you know you have ju had the small-pox, and, as you are not yet quite recovered feared that sitting up late would fatigue you."

"You had not the same fear yesterday, when you made i go to the palace to pass those abominable edicts, which ha caused the people to murmur so much."

"Sire," said Laporte, in order to create a diversion, "whom does your Majesty wish that I should give the candle

"To whomever you please, Laporte," replied the boy, "p vided," he added, in a loud voice, "that it be not to Mancin

Mancini was a nephew of the Cardinal's, whom Mazarin h placed near the King as a page, and against whom Lo directed some of that hatred which he had for his minister.

And the King left the room, without either kissing l mother or saluting the Cardinal.

"Well done!" said Mazarin; "I am delighted to perce that his Majesty is brought up with a horror of dissimulatio

"And how so?" said the Queen, in a timid voice.

"Well, it seems to me that the King's mode of leaving t room requires no comment. Besides, his Majesty does n give himself the trouble to conceal his lack of affection f me; but this will not lessen my devotion to his service, as w as to that of your Majesty."

"I beg pardon for him, Cardinal," said the Queen; "t boy is not yet able to appreciate his obligations to you."

The Cardinal smiled.

"But," continued the Queen, "you are doubtless come f some important object. What is it?"

Mazarin seated or rather threw himself in a chair, and sa in a melancholy tone:

"We shall, in all probability, be soon compelled to separa unless you carry your devotion to me so far as to follow me Italy."

"And why so?" demanded the Queen.

"Because, as the opera of 'Thisbe' says," replied Mazar

"'*The whole world conspires to separate our hearts.*'"

"You are jesting, sir," said the Queen, endeavouring assume somewhat of her former dignity.

"Alas, no, madame!" replied Mazarin; "I am not jestin I am, believe me, much more inclined to weep; and there good reason for it; for mark well what I say —

"'*The whole world conspires to separate our hearts.*'

"Now, as you constitute a portion of this whole world, I would say that you also abandon me."

"Cardinal!"

"Ah, my God! did I not see you the other day smiling most sweetly at the Duc d'Orléans, or, rather, at what he said?"

"And what did he say?"

"He said, madame, — it is your Mazarin who is the stumbling-block; let him depart and all will be well!"

"And what would you have had me do?"

"Oh, madame, you are the Queen, I believe!"

"Charming royalty! that is at the mercy of the first scribbler on dirty paper in the Palais Royal, or the first poor gentleman of the realm!"

"And yet you are powerful enough to remove those who displease you."

"That is to say, who displease you," replied the Queen.

"Me?"

"Yes, certainly. Who sent away Madame de Chevreuse, who had also been persecuted for ten years under the late reign?"

"An intriguing woman, who wished to carry on against me the cabals begun against M. de Richelieu."

"Who banished Madame de Hautefort, that friend so faithful that she refused the King's favour, in order that she might remain in mine?"

"A prude — who every evening told you, whilst she was undressing you, that you perilled your soul by loving a priest; as if a man must necessarily be a priest because he is a cardinal."

"Who caused M. de Beaufort to be arrested?"

"A turbulent fellow, who actually talked of assassinating me."

"You plainly see, Cardinal, that your enemies are mine also."

"That is not sufficient, madame; it is also necessary that your friends should be mine."

"My friends, sir!" (The Queen shook her head.) "Alas! I have no longer any."

"How is it that you have none in prosperity, when you had so many in adversity?"

"Because in my prosperity I forgot those friends — because I have acted like the Queen Marie de' Medicis, who, on

her return from her first exile, despised all those who had s fered for her, and who, when banished a second time, died Cologne, abandoned by all the world, nay, even by her o son, because all the world in turn despised her."

"Well, then, let us see," said Mazarin, "if there be not time to repair this evil. Think over some of your friends of your most ancient friends."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Nothing but what I say. Think them over."

"Alas! in vain should I look around me. I have no lon influence over any one. Monsieur is, as usual, managed his favourite. Yesterday it was Choisy; to-day it is Rivière; to-morrow it will be some one else. The Prince led by the coadjutor, who is led by Madame de Guéménée."

"And therefore, madame, I do not wish you to look amon your friends of the present time, but amongst those of byg days."

"Amongst my friends of bygone days?" said the Queen.

"Yes, amongst your friends of bygone days — amongst th who assisted you in struggling against the Duc de Richeli and in conquering him too."

"What is he aiming at?" murmured the Queen, looki anxiously at the Cardinal.

"Yes," he continued, "in certain circumstances, with t powerful and acute mind that characterises your Majesty, y were able, thanks to the aid of your friends, to repulse t adversary's attacks."

"I!" said the Queen. "I suffered — that is all!"

"Yes," replied Mazarin, "as women suffer — by revengi themselves! However, let us come to facts. Do you kn M. de Rochefort?"

"M. de Rochefort was not one of my friends," said the Quee "on the contrary, he was one of my bitterest enemies, and c of the most devoted of the Cardinal's followers. I thou you knew that."

"I know it so well," said Mazarin, "that we put him i the Bastille."

"And has he left it?" demanded the Queen.

"No; you may be assured that he is still there. But I o mention him to come to another. Do you know M. d'A gnan?" continued Mazarin, looking the Queen full in the fa

Anne of Austria received the blow directly in the heart.

"Can the Gascon have been indiscreet?" she murmured.

Then she said aloud: "D'Artagnan? Wait, now — yes, certainly, that name is familiar to me. D'Artagnan! — a Musketeer, who was in love with one of my women — a poor little creature, who was poisoned in my service."

"Is that all?" said Mazarin.

The Queen looked at the Cardinal with astonishment.

"It appears to me, sir, as if you were subjecting me to a regular interrogatory."

"To which, of course," said Mazarin, with his eternal smile and his ever-smooth voice, "you will only answer according to your capricious fancy."

"Explain your wishes openly and clearly, sir, and I will answer them in the same manner," said the Queen, with some impatience.

"Well, then, madame," continued Mazarin, bowing, "I desire that you will share your friends with me, and I share with you whatever little industry and talents Heaven has gifted me with. Circumstances are serious, and all our energy will be required."

"Again!" said the Queen. "I hoped that we had finished with M. de Beaufort."

"Yes, you looked only at the torrent that threatened to carry everything before it, and paid no attention to the still waters; and yet there is a proverb in France about still waters running deep."

"Proceed," said the Queen.

"Well, then," continued Mazarin, "I am daily affronted by your princes and titled servants — all mere automatons, who see not that I hold the thread of their fate, and who do not descry under my calm and patient gravity the smile of an irritated man, who has sworn to himself one day to have them in his power. We then had M. de Beaufort arrested, it is true; but he was the least dangerous of all. There is still M. le Prince."

"What! the conqueror of Rocroi? Do you think of him?"

"Yes, madame, and very often. But *patienza*, as we Italians say. Then after M. de Condé, there is the Duc d'Orléans."

"What are you saying? The first Prince of the blood — the King's uncle!"

"Not the first Prince of the blood — not the King's uncle;

but the dastardly conspirator who, under the late reign pushed forward by his fantastic and capricious dispositi corroded by a miserable restlessness, devoured by a wretcl ambition, jealous of every one who surpassed him in loya and courage, irritated at being utterly valueless — becai thanks to his nothingness, the echo of every evil rumour, t soul of every cabal; and pretended to lead all those brave n who had the folly to trust the word of a Prince of the blo and who found to their cost that he disowned and abandor them when they had mounted the scaffold! Not the fi Prince of the blood — not the King's uncle, I repeat; but t murderer of Chalais, of Montmorency, and of Cinq-Mars; w is now endeavouring to play the same game, and fancies tl he shall win it because he has changed his adversary, a because instead of being opposed to a man who threatens, has one who smiles. But he deceives himself. It never c be for my interest to leave near the Queen that brand of c cord by which the late Cardinal kept the King in irritat for twenty years."

The Queen blushed and concealed her face in her hands.

"I do not wish to humiliate your Majesty," contin Mazarin, in a tone of singular firmness, but at the same ti much more calmly than before. "I wish the Queen to respected, and her minister also — since, in the eyes of t world, I am only her minister. Your Majesty knows tha am not, as many say, a mere Italian adventurer; and the wo must know it, as well as your Majesty."

"Well, then, what must I do?" said Anne of Austria, s dued by his imperious manner.

"You must endeavour to remember the names of those fai ful and devoted servants who, in spite of Richelieu, leav traces of their blood on all their route, crossed the sea to br back to your Majesty a certain ornament which you had gi to the Duke of Buckingham."

Anne rose, majestic and angry, as if she had been raised a steel spring, and gazed at the Cardinal with that haugl and dignified air which made her so powerful in her youth.

"You insult me, sir!" said she.

"I wish, in fine," continued Mazarin, terminating the thou which she had interrupted, — "I wish that you should now for your husband what you formerly did for your lover."

"Still this calumny!" exclaimed the Queen. "I had thou

that it was forgotten, for you have not hitherto alluded to it. But at length you bring it forward. So much the better! For now we will discuss the matter, and then it shall be done with forever. Do you understand?"

"But, madame," said Mazarin, astonished by this resumption of energy, "I do not ask you to tell me all."

"But I, sir, wish to tell you all," replied Anne of Austria. "Listen, then. I will tell you that there were, in fact, at that time, four devoted hearts, four loyal souls, four trusty swords, which preserved more than my life, sir, for they saved my honor."

"Ah, you confess it!" said the Cardinal.

"And is it the guilty only whose honour is often perilled, sir?" replied Anne of Austria. "And cannot any woman be disgraced, solely by appearances? Yes, appearances were against me, and I should have been disgraced; and yet I swear that I was not guilty — I swear it!"

The Queen sought for something sacred on which she might swear, and drawing from a closet concealed in the tapestry a small rosewood casket inlaid with silver, and placing it on the altar, — "I swear on these sacred relics," she continued, "that I loved the Duke of Buckingham, but he was never my favoured lover."

"And what are these relics on which you make this oath, madame?" said Mazarin, smiling. "For I tell you, madame, as a Roman, that I am incredulous."

The Queen detached a small golden key from her neck and gave it to the Cardinal, saying, "Open it, sir, and see them yourself."

Mazarin, in great astonishment, took the key and opened the casket, in which he found nothing but a rusty knife and two letters, one of which was stained with blood.

"And what does this mean?" inquired Mazarin.

"What does it mean, sir?" replied Anne of Austria, with her queenly gesture, and pointing to the casket with an arm still of unrivalled beauty, in spite of her years. "I will tell you. Those two letters are the only ones that I ever wrote to the Duke of Buckingham; that is the knife with which Felton stabbed him. Read the letters, sir, and you will see if I have spoken the truth."

Notwithstanding the permission he had received, Mazarin, governed by a natural impulse, instead of reading the letters,

took up the knife which the dying Buckingham had dra from his wound, and which he had sent by Laporte to t Queen. The blade was much corroded, for the blood had turr into rust. Then, after a moment's examination, during whi the Queen had become as pale as the cloth that covered t altar on which she was leaning, he replaced it in the cask with an involuntary shudder.

"It is well, madame," said he; "I trust to your oath."

"No, no, read!" said the Queen, with a frown; "read! wish — I command you! So that, as I have resolved, everythi may be now finished once and forever, and we may never ag recur to the subject. Do you think," she said, with a terril smile, "that I should be disposed to reopen this casket every one of your future accusations?"

Mazarin, vanquished by this energy, obeyed almost mech ically, and read both the letters. One was that in which t Queen requested Buckingham to return the diamond tags whi D'Artagnan had carried, and which had reached him in tin the other was that which Laporte had carried to Buckingha warning him of his assassination, and which had arrived t late.

"It is very well, madame," said Mazarin; "nothing can said against it."

"Yes, sir," said the Queen, closing the casket and placi her hand on it; "yes, something may be said; and it is, tha have always been very ungrateful to those who saved me, a who did all they could to save him, — it is, that I gave nothi to that brave D'Artagnan, of whom you spoke just now, t my hand to kiss and this diamond."

The Queen extended her beautiful hand to the Cardinal, a showed him a splendid stone glittering on her finger.

"He sold it, apparently," continued her Majesty, "wh under temporary embarrassment — he sold it to save me second time; for it was to send a messenger to the Duke, warn him that he was in danger of assassination."

"Then D'Artagnan knew it?"

"He knew everything! How did he? I don't kn But he sold this ring to M. des Essarts, on whose finger I s it, and from whom I bought it back. But this diamond belor to him, sir. Give it him from me; and, since you have t good fortune to have such a man near you, endeavour to ma good use of him."

"Thank you, madame. I will avail myself of your advice."

"And now," said the Queen, as if exhausted by emotion, "have you any other question to ask me?"

"Nothing, madame," said the Cardinal, in his most caressing voice, "except to pardon me for my unjust suspicions. But I love you so much that it is not wonderful that I am jealous, even of the past."

An indescribable smile passed over the Queen's lips.

"Well then, sir," said she, "if you have nothing more to ask me, leave me. You must feel that, after such a scene, I have need of solitude."

Mazarin bowed.

"I leave you, madame; but may I return?"

"Yes, to-morrow. I shall not have had too long a time to recover myself."

The Cardinal took her hand, gallantly kissed it, and left the room.

Scarcely was he gone, when the Queen went into her son's chamber and asked Laporte if he was in bed. Laporte pointed to the sleeping child. Anne of Austria mounted the steps of the bed, and softly imprinted a kiss on her son's forehead. Then she retired as silently as she had entered, merely saying to the *valet de chambre:*

"Now, my dear Laporte, try to make the King look more favourably upon M. le Cardinal. We are both under the greatest obligations to him."

CHAPTER V.

GASCON AND ITALIAN.

In the meantime the Cardinal had returned to his cabinet, at the door of which he found Bernouin waiting. He inquired of him whether anything new had happened, and whether he had heard tidings from without. On his answering in the negative he dismissed him.

Being now alone, he opened the door of the corridor, and then of the antechamber. D'Artagnan, much fatigued, was asleep on a bench.

"M. d'Artagnan!" said he, in a soft voice.

D'Artagnan did not stir.

"M. d'Artagnan!" he repeated, in a louder tone.

D'Artagnan still slept.

The Cardinal went up to him and touched his shoulder.

This time he started, awoke, and in an instant was stan stiff and upright, as if on parade.

"Here I am," said he. "Who calls me?"

"I do," said Mazarin, with his sweetest smile.

"I beg your Eminence's pardon," said D'Artagnan, "b was so fatigued" —

"Do not beg my pardon, sir," replied Mazarin, "for fatigued yourself in my service."

D'Artagnan wondered at the minister's gracious answer.

"Heyday!" said he, between his teeth, "is the pro true which says, Luck comes when one is sleeping?"

"Follow me, sir," said Mazarin.

"Come, come," thought D'Artagnan to himself, "Roch has kept his word; but where the deuce is he gone to?"

He looked into every corner of the room, but Rochefort no longer there.

"M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, settling himself com ably in his easy-chair, "you have always appeared to m be a brave and gallant man."

"Possibly so," thought D'Artagnan; "but he has t plenty of time in letting me know his opinion." But did not prevent his bowing to the ground in reply to Maza compliment.

"Well," continued Mazarin, "the time is arrived for m profit by your talents and valour."

A gleam of joy flashed from the officer's eyes, but i suddenly vanished, for he knew not what Mazarin was ing at.

"Monsignor has only to command," said he; "I am r to obey your Eminence."

"M. d'Artagnan," continued Mazarin, "you performed tain exploits under the late reign" —

"Your Eminence is too good to remember them. It is I served in the war with some degree of success."

"I do not refer to your warlike exploits," said Maza "for although they made some noise in the world, they surpassed by the others."

D'Artagnan assumed an appearance of astonishment.

"I am waiting for monsignor to inform me to what exploits he refers."

"I refer to that adventure — Hé! you know very well what I mean."

"Alas, no, monsignor!" replied D'Artagnan, now really astonished.

"You are discreet. So much the better. I refer to that adventure of the Queen — those diamond tags — that journey which you took with three of your friends."

"Aha!" thought the Gascon, "it is a regular trap; let us keep on our guard."

And he fortified his features with an assumption of the most complete stolidity, such as Mondori or Bellerose, the two best comedians of the day, would have envied.

"Capital!" said Mazarin, laughing, "bravo! It was well to tell me that you were exactly the man I wanted. Come, let us see what you would do for me."

"Whatever your Eminence may command me to do," replied D'Artagnan.

"Would you do for me what you formerly did for a queen?"

"Decidedly," said D'Artagnan to himself, "he wants to make me speak. But let me first see what he is aiming at. Plague take him! He is not sharper than Richelieu."

"Monsignor, for a queen? I do not understand you."

"You do not comprehend, then, that I have need of you and your three friends?"

"Of what friends, monsignor?"

"Your three old friends."

"Of my three friends of old times, your Excellence?" replied D'Artagnan. "I had not three friends — I had fifty. A man at twenty calls every one his friend."

"Well, well, sir officer," said Mazarin, "discretion is a fine thing; but now you might repent having been too discreet."

"Monsignor, Pythagoras made his followers keep silence for five years, to teach them to hold their tongues."

"And you have kept it for twenty years, sir, — that is, fifteen more than the Pythagorean philosophers, — which appears to me quite sufficient. Speak now, therefore, for the Queen herself releases you from your oath."

"The Queen!" said D'Artagnan, with an astonishment which was now not put on.

"Yes, the Queen; and to prove that I speak in her name,

she told me to show you this diamond, which she says you know, and which she purchased of M. des Essarts."

And Mazarin held out his hand to the officer, who sighed on beholding the ring which the Queen had given him on the night of the ball at the Hôtel de Ville.

"It is true," said D'Artagnan. "I recognise that diamond; it belonged to the Queen."

"You see, therefore, that I speak to you in her name. Answer me, then, without playing this comedy any further. I have already told you, and I repeat it, your fortune depends upon it."

"Faith, monsignor, I have some need of good fortune. Your Eminence has so long forgotten me."

"A week will make up for all that. Come, then; you are here — but where are your friends?"

"I have not the least idea, monsignor."

"How is it you have not the least idea?"

"'T is true. It is long since we parted; for all three left the service."

"But where will you find them?"

"Oh, wherever they may be. That is my affair."

"Very well. Your conditions?"

"Money, monsignor,— as much as our enterprises may require. Faith, I remember too well how greatly we were impeded by lack of money; and had it not been for that diamond, which I was obliged to sell, we should have been completely arrested in our course."

"The devil, you say!" exclaimed Mazarin. "Money — and plenty of it! How you are getting on, sir officer! Do you not know that there is no money in the King's coffers?"

"Then follow my example, monsignor — sell the Crown diamonds. Believe me, you must not drive a close bargain with us. Great actions are but badly executed with small means."

"Well, well," said Mazarin, "we will give you satisfaction."

"Richelieu," thought D'Artagnan, "would at once have given me five hundred pistoles as earnest money."

"You will be on my side?" asked the Cardinal.

"Yes, if my friends agree to it."

"But should they refuse — may I still depend upon you?"

"I have never done anything well alone," answered D'Artagnan, shaking his head.

"Then go and find them."

"And what shall I say to induce them to serve your Eminence?"

"You know them better than I do; and according to their characters, you must promise them."

"But what am I to promise them?"

"Let them serve me as they did the Queen, and their reward shall be brilliant."

"And what are we to do?"

"Everything — since it appears that you can do everything."

"Monsignor, when confidence is reposed in men and it is desired that it be mutual, more definite information is granted them than your Eminence affords."

"When the time of action comes," said Mazarin, "be assured that you shall have full information."

"And till that time" —

"Wait, and be finding your friends."

"Monsignor, perhaps they may not be in Paris; indeed, that is probably the case. I must therefore take a journey. I am only a very poor lieutenant of Musketeers, and travelling is expensive."

"My intention," said Mazarin, "is, that you shall not travel with a great train. My projects require secrecy, and would be injured by too large an equipage."

"And yet, your Excellence, I cannot travel on my pay, more especially as it is now three months in arrears to me; and I cannot travel on my savings, seeing that for the twenty-two years that I have been in the service I have only laid up debts."

Mazarin remained a moment pensive as if a struggle were going on in his mind; then going to a chest fastened with a triple lock, he drew from it a bag, which he weighed two or three times in his hand before he gave it to D'Artagnan. "Take this, then," said he, heaving a sigh; "this is for your journey."

"If they are Spanish doubloons, or even crowns of gold," thought D'Artagnan, "we may yet manage pretty well together." He bowed to the Cardinal, and buried the bag in his deep pocket.

"Well, then, it is settled," said the Cardinal; "you will start on your journey."

"Yes, monsignor."

"Write to me daily, to give me an account of your negotiations."

"I will not fail to do so, monsignor."

"Very well; but *à propos* the names of your friends?"

"The names of my friends?" said D'Artagnan, with a remnant of uneasiness.

"Yes. While you are searching for them on your part, I may make some inquiries on mine, and perhaps I may gain some information."

"M. le Comte de la Fère, otherwise called Athos; M. Du Vallon, otherwise called Porthos; and M. le Chevalier d'Herblay, now the Abbé d'Herblay, otherwise called Aramis."

The Cardinal smiled.

"Young men," said he, "who entered the Musketeers under false names, that they might not compromise their family names; long swords, but light purses — I understand that."

"If God should permit these long rapiers to pass into your Eminence's service," said D'Artagnan, "I dare to express a hope that it may be your Eminence's purse that may become light, and theirs heavy. For with these three men and myself, your Eminence may move all France, and even Europe, if such should be your pleasure."

"These Gascons," said Mazarin, "almost equal the Italians in bragging."

"At all events," rejoined D'Artagnan, with a smile worthy of the Cardinal himself, "they are better hands at using the rapier."

Then having asked for his leave of absence, which was at once furnished him and signed by Mazarin, he left the room.

Scarcely was he beyond the precincts of the palace when he went up to a lamp and looked hastily into the bag. "Silver crowns!" said he contemptuously. "I suspected so. Ah, Mazarin, Mazarin! you have no confidence in me. So much the worse! It will only bring you ill luck."

In the meantime the Cardinal was rubbing his hands.

"A hundred pistoles!" he murmured, "a hundred pistoles! For a hundred pistoles I have obtained a secret for which Richelieu would have paid twenty-five thousand crowns — without reckoning this diamond," added he, amorously ogling the diamond which he had kept instead of giving it to D'Artagnan, — "without reckoning this diamond, which is worth at least ten thousand livres."

And the Cardinal went into his chamber, delighted with his evening's success, placed the ring in a casket filled with brilliants of every kind, — for he had a taste for jewels, — and called Bernouin to undress him, without allowing himself to be further disturbed by the noises that shook the windows at intervals, and the shots that still resounded throughout Paris, although it was now past eleven o'clock at night.

In the meantime D'Artagnan was proceeding towards the Rue Tiquetonne where he lived, at the Hôtel de la Chevrette.

Let us briefly explain how he had been led to make choice of this abode.

CHAPTER VI.

D'ARTAGNAN AT FORTY.

ALAS ! Since the time when, in our romance of "The Three Musketeers," we left D'Artagnan at No. 12 in the Rue des Fossoyeurs, many things had happened and many years had elapsed.

D'Artagnan had been ready for opportunities; but circumstances had not been ready for him. So long as he was surrounded by his friends, he had revelled in his youth and his imagination. His was one of those fine and ingenuous minds that easily assimilate the qualities of others. Athos gave him his taste for splendor, Porthos his verve, Aramis his elegance; and if D'Artagnan had continued to live with these three men he would have become a most superior character. First, Athos left him to take possession of a small estate that he had inherited near Blois; then Porthos left him to marry the Solicitor's widow; last, Aramis to take orders and to become an abbé.

From that moment D'Artagnan, who seemed to have mixed up his future with that of his three friends, found himself isolated and weak, and without courage to follow a career in which he foresaw that he could gain no reputation, unless each of his friends should (if we may so speak) communicate to him a portion of that electric fluid which he had received from heaven.

Therefore, although he had become a lieutenant of Musketeers, D'Artagnan found himself still more isolated. He was not of sufficiently high birth, like Athos, to be admitted into

the highest society, nor had he the vanity of Porthos, to make others believe that this was the case. He was not, like Aramis, sufficiently well bred to maintain his natural elegance — an elegance derived from himself. For some time the sweet recollection of Madame Bonacieux had stamped a kind of poetry on the young lieutenant's mind; but, like everything else in this world, this perishable recollection had been gradually effaced. Garrison life is fatal even to aristocratic organizations. Of the two antagonistic natures making up D'Artagnan's individuality, the material one had gradually taken precedence; and very gently, and almost imperceptibly to himself, D'Artagnan, always in garrison, in the camp, or on horseback, had become — I know not what it was called at that period — what we now term a regular trooper.

Not that D'Artagnan had lost his original acuteness. Not at all; on the contrary, that acuteness was perhaps even increased, or, at any rate, appeared doubly remarkable under an exterior somewhat more unpolished. But he had applied this acuteness to the small, and not the great, purposes of life — to his material comforts — to what soldiers deem comforts; that is to say, the possession of a good bed, a good table, and a good hostess.

And for the last six years D'Artagnan had found all these at the sign of the Chevrette, in the Rue Tiquetonne.

During the first period of his abode in that hôtel, the hostess, a fresh and pretty Flemish woman about twenty-five years of age, had been singularly taken with him. After D'Artagnan had had many encounters with an inconvenient husband, whom he had ten or a dozen times threatened to run through the body, that husband went off one fine morning, disappearing after secretly disposing of several casks of wine and taking the money and jewels. He was thought to be dead. His wife more especially, who flattered herself with the soft idea that she was a widow, stoutly maintained that he had departed this life. At last, after a three years' intimacy, which D'Artagnan took good care not to break off, every year finding his situation and his mistress more agreeable than ever, — for the one was due to the other, — his mistress had the unconscionable presumption to wish to become a wife, and proposed to D'Artagnan to espouse her.

"Oh, fie!" replied D'Artagnan. "Bigamy, my dear! Come, now, you cannot mean it!"

"But he is dead; I am quite sure of it."

"He was a most perverse rogue, and is just the fellow to return on purpose to hang us."

"Well, then, if he should return you will kill him; you are so brave and skilful."

"Plague take it, my dear! that is only another mode of getting hanged."

"Therefore you reject my offer?"

"Why, of course; most decidedly."

His beautiful landlady was in despair. She would most willingly have made M. d'Artagnan her husband — such a handsome man, and such a fierce mustache!

About the fourth year of this intimacy, the expedition of Franche Comté took place, and D'Artagnan was ordered on it, and prepared to depart. Then came extreme sorrow, oceans of tears, and solemn promises of eternal fidelity. Be it understood that all this was on the lady's part. D'Artagnan was too great a man to make any promise; therefore he only promised to do all he could to increase his own reputation.

In this respect his courage is well known. He did not spare his own person; and in charging at the head of his company, he received a ball in the chest which laid him out on the field of battle. He was seen to fall from his horse, and was not seen to rise again; therefore he was thought to be dead; and all those who hoped to gain a step by it, at once declared that it was so. What is desired is easily believed; now in the army — from the general of division, who desires the death of the commander-in-chief, even to the privates, who desire the death of the corporals — everybody wishes for the death of some one.

But D'Artagnan was not the sort of man to allow himself to be killed in this manner. After having remained, during the heat of the day, insensible on the field of battle, the coolness of the night restored him to his senses; he reached a village, knocked at the door of the best house, and was received as the French always are everywhere, when wounded. He was nursed, doctored, and cured; and, better than ever, started one fine morning on his way back to France; and once in France, took the road to Paris; and once in Paris, the direction to the Rue Tiquetonne.

But D'Artagnan found his room occupied by a man's portmanteau, complete except for the sword.

"He must be returned," said he. "So much the worse, and so much the better."

Of course he was thinking of the husband.

He made his inquiries. New waiter, new maid; the mistress was gone out for a walk.

"Alone?" asked D'Artagnan.

"With monsieur."

"So monsieur is returned?"

"Certainly," replied the maid-servant, with great simplicity.

"If I had any money I would be off," said D'Artagnan to himself; "but as I have none, I must wait and take counsel with my landlady, as to the way in which I may thwart the conjugal plans of this importunate ghost."

He was just finishing his soliloquy — which proves that in great emergencies nothing is more natural than the soliloquy — when the maid, who was watching at the door, suddenly exclaimed:

"Ah, here is madame just returning with monsieur."

D'Artagnan cast a glance down the street, and descried the landlady turning from the Rue Montmartre, hanging on the arm of an enormous Swiss, who strutted along in a manner that agreeably reminded him of his old friend Porthos.

"And is that monsieur?" queried D'Artagnan to himself. "Oho! he is grown wonderfully, I think."

And he seated himself where he might be easily seen.

The hostess perceived D'Artagnan as she entered, and gave a slight scream. At this little scream, D'Artagnan, concluding that he was discovered, arose and ran and kissed her tenderly.

The Swiss looked with an air of utter stupefaction at the hostess, who remained very pale.

"Ah! is it you, sir? And what do you want of me?" she added, in the greatest distress.

"This gentleman is your cousin? — or is he your brother?" asked D'Artagnan, with the most complete imperturbability; and without waiting for an answer, he threw himself into the arms of the Helvetian, who allowed it with the most perfect unconcern.

"Who is this man?" he demanded.

The hostess only replied by choking.

"Who is this Swiss?" asked D'Artagnan.

"The gentleman is going to marry me," replied the hostess, between two spasms.

"Your husband, then, is dead at last?"

"What tifference does that make to you, sir?" said the Swiss.

"It makes very great tifference to me," replied D'Artagnan, "seeing that you cannot marry madame without my consent, and that" —

"And dat — ?" said the Swiss.

"And dat — I will not give it," answered the Musketeer.

The Swiss grew as red as a peony. He wore his splendid laced uniform, while D'Artagnan was covered with an old gray cloak. The Swiss was six feet tall; D'Artagnan not much more than five. The Swiss considered himself as at home, and D'Artagnan seemed to him an intruder.

"*Vill* you gome out of here?" said the Swiss, stamping violently, like a man beginning to be seriously angry.

"I? Not at all!" replied D'Artagnan.

"Well, then, we must resort to force," said a waiter, who could not comprehend that this little man would dare resist a man so tall.

"You!" said D'Artagnan, who also began to be angry, and seizing the waiter by the ear, — "you will first of all stand here, on this very spot, or I will tear off what I have hold of! As for you, most illustrious descendant of William Tell, you will go and make up a bundle of your things which are in my room and incommode me, and depart as quickly as possible to look after other lodgings."

The Swiss began to laugh vociferously. "I *debart?*" said he; "and *vy* for?"

"Ah, very well!" said D'Artagnan. "I perceive that you understand French, so come and take a turn with me, and I will explain the rest to you."

The hostess, who knew that D'Artagnan was a most perfect swordsman, began to weep and tear her hair.

D'Artagnan turned to the afflicted fair one.

"Then dismiss him, madame," said he.

"*Vat* nonsense!" exclaimed the Swiss, who had required some time to understand the proposition that D'Artagnan had made him — "*vat* nonsense! Are you *mat*, to *brobose* me to *make* a turn *vid* you?"

"I am a lieutenant of his Majesty's Musketeers, and consequently in everything your superior. But as rank has nothing to do with this affair, but merely our quarters, you un-

derstand the custom — the one who first returns will take possession of the apartment."

D'Artagnan led off the Swiss, in spite of the lamentations of the hostess, who really felt her heart leaning towards her old lover, but would not have been sorry to give a lesson to this haughty Musketeer, who had affronted her by the refusal of her hand.

The two adversaries went straight to the trenches of Montmartre. It was night when they reached them. D'Artagnan politely requested the Swiss to give up the room, and to return no more. He gave a negative sign and drew his sword.

"Then you will lie here," said D'Artagnan. "It is a sorry bed; but it is not my fault, for it is your own choice."

And at these words he drew his sword and crossed that of his opponent. He had to do with a rough fist; but his own suppleness was superior to all force. The German's rapier could never pass the Musketeer's. The Swiss had received two wounds before he was sensible of them, on account of the extreme cold; nevertheless, loss of blood and consequent exhaustion obliged him suddenly to sit down.

"There!" said D'Artagnan, "did I not tell you so? You have got yourself into a precious mess, pig-headed that you are! Fortunately, you have only received enough to last you about a fortnight. Remain there, and I will send you your things by the waiter. Au revoir! By the by, I advise you to go to the Rue Montorgueil, at the sign of the *Chat qui pelote;* a capital kitchen — that is to say, if the same hostess be there. Adieu!"

And thereupon he returned right merrily to his quarters, despatched the goods and chattels of the Swiss, whom the waiter found still seated in the same place, astounded by the coolness and valor of his adversary.

The waiter, the hostess, and all the household had the same consideration and respect for D'Artagnan that they would have had for Hercules, had he returned to earth to recommence his twelve labours.

But when he was alone with the hostess — "Now," said he, "fair Madeline, you see the difference between a Swiss and a gentleman. As for you, you have behaved like the mistress of a pot-house. So much the worse for you, for you thus lose both my esteem and my custom. I have driven away the Swiss to humble you; but I will no longer lodge here. I will

not live where I despise the hostess. Hallo, waiter! Carry my valise to the *Muid d'Amour*, Rue des Bourdonnais. Adieu, madame!"

D'Artagnan, in uttering these words, was both dignified and pathetic. The hostess threw herself at his feet, begged his pardon, and retained him by a soft compulsion. Why should we say more? The spit was actually turning — the stove was roaring — the fair Madeline was weeping. D'Artagnan felt hunger, cold, and love returning to him at the same moment; he pardoned her, and having pardoned, he remained.

And thus it happened that D'Artagnan lodged at the Hôtel de la Chevrette, in the Rue Tiquetonne.

CHAPTER VII.

D'ARTAGNAN IS IN SOME EMBARRASSMENT, BUT ONE OF OUR OLD ACQUAINTANCES COMES TO HIS AID.

D'ARTAGNAN was on his way back to his hotel very pensive, finding considerable pleasure in carrying the Cardinal's bag, and thinking of the beautiful diamond which had once belonged to him, and which he had seen for an instant shining on the Prime Minister's finger.

"If that diamond should ever again come into my possession," he said to himself, "I would immediately convert it into money, and purchase some property round my château, which is a handsome mansion, but has for the only land appertaining to it a garden not larger than the cemetery of the Innocents; and there I should remain in my dignity till some rich heiress, attracted by my good looks, should come and marry me. Then I should have three boys: of the first I should make a man of consequence, like Athos; of the second, a handsome soldier, like Porthos; and of the third, a gentle abbé, like Aramis. Faith, that would be much better than living the life I do! But, unhappily, that skinflint Mazarin will not give up his diamond for my sake."

What would D'Artagnan have said had he known that this diamond had been intrusted to the Cardinal by the Queen, to be given to him?

On entering the Rue Tiquetonne, he perceived that there

was a great tumult there; and a considerable crowd was collected near his quarters.

"Hallo," said he, "can the Hôtel de la Chevrette be on fire? Or has the husband of the fair Madeline positively returned?"

It was neither the one nor the other. On drawing near, he perceived that in front of, not his own hôtel, but before the next house, the crowd was collected. They were shouting and running about with torches; and by the light of these torches, D'Artagnan perceived uniforms.

He inquired what was the matter; and was informed that a citizen, with about twenty of his friends, had attacked a carriage escorted by some of the Cardinal's Guards; but that a reënforcement had come up, and the citizens had been put to flight. The leader of the mob had taken refuge in the house next to the hôtel, and they were now searching it.

In his youth, D'Artagnan would have hastened to assist the soldiers against the citizens. But he had grown quite cool-headed; and, besides, he had a hundred pistoles in his pocket, and did not wish to venture into a crowd.

He therefore entered his hôtel, without asking any more questions. Formerly, D'Artagnan always wished to know everything: now he always knew quite enough.

He found the fair Madeline not expecting him. She supposed that he would pass the night at the Louvre, as he had told her he should do. She was, therefore, much rejoiced at his return; the more especially as she was much alarmed by what was taking place in the street, and moreover had not now any Swiss to protect her.

She therefore wished to talk with him, and tell him all that had happened. But D'Artagnan bade her have his supper carried up to his room, with the addition of a bottle of old Burgundy.

The fair Madeline was drilled to military obedience; that is to say, to understand a sign. This time D'Artagnan had deigned to speak; he was, therefore, obeyed with double celerity.

D'Artagnan took his key and his candle, and went to his chamber. He had been content to take a room on the fourth floor so as not to injure the custom of the house. The respect we have for truth compels us to confess that it was just below the gutter and below the roof. Here was his tent of Achilles; and he shut himself up in this chamber whenever he wished to punish the fair Madeline by his absence.

His first care was to hide his bag in an old desk with a new ock. He had not as yet had time to verify the exact amount hich the Cardinal had given him. Then, his supper being erved and his wine brought, he dismissed the waiter, shut the oor, and sat down at table. It was not to reflect, as might be magined. For D'Artagnan thought that things were never ell done unless each came in its regular order. He was ungry — therefore he supped; and after supper he went to ed. D'Artagnan was not one of those persons who think that he night produces wisdom: in the night D'Artagnan slept. But in the morning, on the contrary, quite fresh and with all is wits about him, he experienced the best inspirations. For long time he had had no need of thinking in the morning; ut he had always slept at night.

He awoke at the earliest dawn, sprang from his bed with rue military resolution, and walked round his chamber in neditation.

"In the year '43, about six months before the death of the ate Cardinal, I received a letter from Athos; and where was t? — let me see — oh! it was at the siege of Besançon, I emember — I was in the trenches. And what did he say to ne? That he dwelt on a small property — yes, that's it — a mall property. But where was it? I had just read so far, when a gust of wind carried off the letter. Formerly I should ave gone after it, although the wind had blown it into the most xposed situation. But youth is a great fault — that is to say, when one is no longer young. I allowed my letter to go, and arry Athos's address to the Spaniards, who had nothing to do with it, and might as well have returned it to me. There is no use, therefore, in thinking of Athos. Now let us see — Porthos — I had a letter from him also; he invited me to a great hunting-match on his property, for the month of September, 1646. Unfortunately, as I was in Béarn at that time, on account of my father's death, the letter followed me; and I had left before it arrived. But it set off in pursuit of me, and reached Montmédy some days after I had left that city. At last it caught me, in the month of April, but as it was only in the month of April, 1647, that it caught me, and the invitation was for September, '46, I could not take advantage of it. Let us see — I must look for this letter; it ought to be with the title-deeds of my property."

D'Artagnan opened an old casket that lay in a corner of his

chamber, filled with parchments relative to the aforesaid pr erty, which had for the last two hundred years passed entir away from his family; and he uttered an exclamation of j as he there descried the gigantic handwriting of Porthos, a underneath, some lines scratched by the withered hand of worthy spouse.

D'Artagnan did not amuse himself with reading the lett for he well knew its contents. He hastened to the addre This was at the Château du Vallon. Porthos, however, h forgotten every other direction. In his pride, he imagin that all the world must know the château to which he h given his name.

"The devil take the vain fellow!" said D'Artagn "Always the same! I was going to begin with him, seei that he ought not to want money — he who inherited the eig hundred thousand livres of M. Coquenard. There! the best lost; for Athos must have become an idiot from drinking; a as for Aramis, he must be entirely given up to his devotion

D'Artagnan again cast his eyes on Porthos's letter. Th was a postscript containing this sentence:

"I write by the same courier to our worthy friend Aram at his monastery."

"At his monastery! Yes, but what monastery? Th are two hundred in Paris and three thousand in France. A then, perhaps, on entering his monastery, he has, for the th time, changed his name. Ah! if I was a wise theologian, a could only recollect the subject of the thesis which he discuss so well with the Curate of Montdidier and the Superior of t Jesuits, I might ascertain what doctrine he supported, a might thence infer to what saint he had consecrated himse What if I went to the Cardinal, and demanded an author to enter every monastery? It would be a good idea, and p chance I might discover him there like Achilles. Yes; but would be to confess, at the very onset, my own incompeten and from the first I should be ruined in the Cardinal's estin tion. Men in power are only grateful for the performance impossibilities. 'If it had been possible,' they say, 'I wo have done it myself.' And they are right. But wait a l I also received a letter from him, the dear friend, by the sa token that he required of me a slight service, which I render him. Ah, yes! But where did I put his letter?"

D'Artagnan reflected a moment, and went toward the clo

where his old clothes were hung; there he looked for his doublet of the year 1648, and, as he was a methodical fellow, he found it hung on its peg. He searched the pocket, and drew from it a paper — it was indeed Aramis's letter.

"M. d'Artagnan," it said, "you must know that I have had a quarrel with a gentleman, who has made an appointment with me for this evening, at the Place Royal. As I am in the Church, and the affair might injure me if I communicated it to any other than to a friend so faithful as yourself, I write to you, that you may serve as my second. You must enter by the Neuve Sainte Catherine; under the second lamp, to the right, you will find your opponent. I shall be with mine under the third.

"Your devoted
"ARAMIS."

Here there was not even an adieu.

D'Artagnan endeavoured to recall the circumstances to his memory. He had gone to the appointment; had there met the opponent indicated, whose name he had never known; had accommodated him with a jolly sword-thrust in the arm; had then gone toward Aramis, who, on his side, had come to meet him, having already finished his affair.

"It is all over," Aramis had said. "I believe I have killed the rascal. But, my dear friend, if you ever want me, you know that I am completely at your service." Upon which Aramis had squeezed his hand and disappeared under the arcades.

He knew no more, therefore, where Aramis was than where Athos and Porthos were; and the affair began to be sufficiently embarrassing, when he imagined he heard the noise of a window breaking in his room. He immediately thought of his bag, which was in his desk, and rushed out of the closet. He was not mistaken; at the very moment that he went in by the door, a man was coming in by the window.

"Ah, wretch!" cried D'Artagnan, taking the man for a robber, and seizing his sword.

"Sir," cried out the man, "in the name of Heaven put up your sword, and do not kill me without hearing me. I am not a robber — far from it. I am an honest, well-established citizen, having a house of my own. I am called — But is it possible — you are M. d'Artagnan!"

"And you Planchet!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"At your service, sir," said Planchet, in a rapture of delight; "that is to say, if I am yet capable of it."

"Perhaps so," said D'Artagnan; "but what the deuce are you doing, running about on the roofs at seven o'clock of a January morning?"

"Sir," said Planchet, "you must know — But, in fact, perhaps you must not know."

"Come, let us hear what it is," said D'Artagnan. "But first put a napkin before the broken pane, and draw the curtains."

Planchet obeyed; and when he had finished —

"Well," said D'Artagnan.

"First of all, sir," said the prudent Planchet, "on what terms are you with M. de Rochefort?"

"Why, marvellously good; but you know well enough yourself that he is now one of my best friends."

"Ah! so much the better."

"But what has Rochefort to do with your entering my chamber in this manner?"

"Ah! see there now, sir! First I must tell you that M. de Rochefort is" — Planchet hesitated.

"Pardieu!" said D'Artagnan. "I know very well that he is in the Bastille."

"That is to say, he *was* there," answered Planchet.

"How? He was there?" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Has he, then, had the good fortune to escape?"

"Ah, sir!" cried Planchet in turn, "if you call it good fortune, all is right. Then I must tell you that it seems that M. de Rochefort was sent for from the Bastille yesterday evening."

"I know that well, since I was the person who went for him."

"But happily for him, you did not carry him back; for if I had seen you amongst the escort, believe me, sir, that I have always far too much respect for you" —

"Finish, then, you animal! Let me know what has happened."

"Well, then, it happened that M. de Rochefort's carriage was passing along the middle of the Rue de la Ferronnerie, through a knot of people, and that the escort roughly jostled the crowd; some murmurs were excited. The prisoner considered the opportunity favourable, told his name, and cried out for assistance. I was there, and recognised the name of

the Comte de Rochefort; I remembered that it was he who made me a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont. I exclaimed that it was a prisoner, a friend of the Duc de Beaufort. The mob was excited, stopped the horses, and overthrew the escort. In the meantime I opened the door; M. de Rochefort jumped out and was soon lost in the crowd. Unfortunately, a patrol was passing just at the time; it joined the Guards and charged us. I beat a retreat towards the Rue Tiquetonne, but was closely followed. I escaped into the house next to this. They surrounded and searched it; but in vain. I found in the fifth story a compassionate person who concealed me between two mattresses. I remained in my hiding-place until near morning; but, expecting that the search would be renewed, I ventured out on the gutters, first looking for an entrance, and then an exit, in some house which was not watched. That is my tale, sir; and, upon my honour, I shall be in despair if it should be disagreeable to you."

"Not at all," said D'Artagnan; "on the contrary, I am very glad, in faith, that Rochefort is at liberty. But do you know one thing? — that if you fall into the hands of the King's people, you will be hanged without mercy?"

"Ah! I know that well enough," replied Planchet; "and that is what disturbs me so much; and it is also the reason that I am so glad to have found you; for if you are willing to conceal me, no one can do it better than yourself."'

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "I wish for nothing better; although I risk neither more nor less than my commission, if it was found out that I harboured a rebel."

"Ah, sir! you know very well that I would risk my life for you!"

"You might also add, Planchet, that you have risked it. I never forget anything but what I ought to forget; and as to this, I wish to remember it. Sit down there, then, and eat at your ease; for I can perceive that you are casting very eloquent glances at the remnants of my supper."

"Yes, sir; for your neighbour's cupboard was very ill furnished as to edibles; and I have had nothing to eat since yesterday noon but a small roll and some preserve. Although I do not dislike sweets when they come at their proper time and place, I confess I found my supper rather light."

"Poor fellow!" said D'Artagnan. "Well, then, refresh yourself."

"Ah, sir!" cried Planchet, "you save my life a second time."

And he sat himself down, and began to eat as in the glorious days of the Rue Fossoyeurs.

D'Artagnan continued walking up and down the room. He turned over in his mind what use he could make of Planchet, in his present circumstances. In the meantime Planchet was doing all he could to make up for lost time. At last he emitted that sigh of satisfaction which a hungry man breathes when, having laid a pretty solid foundation, he begins to make a slight halt.

"And now let us see," said D'Artagnan, who thought that moment was arrived when he might begin his questions. "Let us do everything in order. Do you know where Athos is?"

"No, sir," answered Planchet.

"The devil!" cried D'Artagnan. "Do you know where Porthos is?"

"Not at all."

"The devil, the devil! — and Aramis?"

"Not the slightest idea!"

"The devil, the devil, the devil!"

"But," continued Planchet, in his sly way, "I know where Bazin is."

"Ah! you know where Bazin is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is he?"

"At Notre Dame."

"And what is he doing at Notre Dame?"

"He is the beadle."

"What! Bazin beadle at Notre Dame! Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure! I have seen him. I have spoken to him."

"He must know where his master is?"

"Without the least doubt."

D'Artagnan reflected, then took his cloak and sword and prepared to go out.

"Sir," cried Planchet, in a most lugubrious voice, "do you abandon me in this manner? Consider that my sole hope is in you."

"But no one will come to look for you here," said D'Artagnan.

"But even if they should not come to look for me," replied the prudent Planchet, "consider that the people of the house, who did not see me come in, will think that I am a thief."

"That 's true," said D'Artagnan. "Let us see — can you speak any sort of patois ?"

"I can do better than that, sir," answered Planchet. "I can speak Flemish."

"And where the deuce did you learn it ?"

"In Artois, where I served for two years. Listen: '*Goeden morgen, mynheer, ik ben begeeray te weeten, the gesondhects omstand.*'"[1]

"And what does that mean ?"

"Good morning, sir; I am very anxious to know the state of your health."

"And that you call a language! But never mind," added D'Artagnan, "it will do very well."

He went to the door, called a waiter, and ordered him to tell the fair Madeline to come up.

"What are you doing, sir ?" said Planchet; "do you confide our secret to a woman ?"

"Make yourself easy; she will not breathe a word to any one."

At the moment the hostess entered. She came up smiling, expecting to find D'Artagnan alone; but drew back with astonishment when she saw Planchet.

"My dear hostess," said D'Artagnan, "allow me to introduce to you your brother, who is just come from Flanders, and whom I take into my service for some time."

"My brother !" cried the hostess, more astonished than ever.

"Wish your sister good morning, then, Master Peter."

"*Velkom, zuster,*" said Planchet.

"*Goeden day, broer,*" replied the astonished hostess.

"Now observe," said D'Artagnan; "this gentleman is your brother, whom perhaps you may not know, but I know him. He is just come from Amsterdam. You will clothe him during my absence; on my return you will present him to me; and upon your recommendation, although he cannot speak a word of French, as I can refuse you nothing I will take him into my service. Do you understand me ?"

"That is to say, I guess what you require, and that is all that I require," said Madeline.

"You are a precious woman, my sweet hostess; and I am grateful to you."

On which, having given a nod of intelligence to Planchet, D'Artagnan went out to proceed to Notre Dame.

[1] Needless to say, the *Flemish* is somewhat worse than Fluellen's English. — N. H. D.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS WHICH HALF A PISTOLE HAS ON A BEADLE AND ON A CHOIR-BOY.

D'ARTAGNAN went over the Pont Neuf, congratulating himself on having found Planchet; for, while he seemed to be serving the worthy fellow, Planchet was really serving him. Nothing, in reality, could be more acceptable to him under his present circumstances than a brave and intelligent lacquey. It was true that Planchet would not, in all probability, remain long in his service; but even on resuming his domestic position in the Rue des Lombards, Planchet would still be under obligations to him, for having almost or quite saved his life by concealing him; and D'Artagnan was not sorry to have some connection with the bourgeoisie at the very time it was on the verge of war with the Court. It was like having a secret communication or intercourse with some one in the enemy's camp; and with a man so shrewd as D'Artagnan, slight things might lead to great consequences.

He reached Notre Dame, therefore, in a disposition sufficiently contented, both with fortune and himself. He mounted the steps, entered the church, and addressing a sacristan, who was sweeping a chapel, inquired if he knew M. Bazin.

"What, M. Bazin the beadle?" said the sacristan.

"The same."

"There he is, officiating at Mass, yonder in the chapel of the Virgin."

D'Artagnan trembled with delight; for, in spite of what Planchet had said, he feared that he should not find Bazin. But now that he had got hold of one end of the thread, he was quite satisfied that he would reach the other end.

He went and knelt down opposite the chapel, in order that he might not lose sight of his man. Fortunately it was low Mass, which would quickly be finished. D'Artagnan, who had forgotten his prayers, and who had omitted to take a prayer book, employed his leisure in examining Bazin.

Bazin wore his costume, it must be allowed, with as much dignity as holiness. It was easy to see that he had reached, or nearly reached, the summit of his ambition, and that the silver-mounted *baleine* which he carried in his hand appeared

as honourable to him as the bâton which Condé threw, or did not throw, into the enemy's lines at the battle of Fribourg. His outward man had undergone a change, if we may so speak, completely analogous to his costume. His whole body had become rotund, and, as it were, canonical. The prominent features of his face appeared to have vanished. His nose was certainly there; but the cheeks, in growing round, had each stolen a part of it. The chin was making its escape into his neck; and something, which was not actually fat, but a sort of pasty puffiness, had almost closed up his eyes. His hair, cut squarely and reverently, covered his forehead to within three lines of his eyebrows. Let us hasten to say that Bazin had never possessed, even when it was most uncovered, more than an inch and a half of forehead.

The officiating priest finished the Mass at the same time that D'Artagnan did his examination; he pronounced the sacramental words and retired, giving, to D'Artagnan's great astonishment, the benediction, which all received kneeling. D'Artagnan's astonishment ceased when he discovered in this officiating priest the coadjutor himself; that is to say, the famous Jean François de Gondy, who at that time, foreseeing the character he was about to play, was beginning to make himself popular by distributing alms. And it was to increase that popularity that he from time to time said one of those matutinal Masses which the common people alone are accustomed to attend.

D'Artagnan went on his knees like the others, received his share of the benediction, and made the sign of the cross; but at the moment when Bazin came by, with eyes raised to the skies and marching humbly in the rear, D'Artagnan pulled him back by the skirt of his gown.

Bazin lowered his eyes, and started as if he had seen a serpent. "M. d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed. "*Vade retro, Satanas . . . !*"

"Well now, my dear Bazin," said the officer, "is this the way you receive an old friend?"

"Sir," replied Bazin, "the true friends of a Christian are those who lead him to salvation, and not those who turn him from it."

"I do not understand you, Bazin," said D'Artagnan; "and I do not see how I can be a stumbling-block in the way of your salvation."

"You forget, sir," replied Bazin, "that you were very near forever destroying my poor master's; and that so far as you were concerned he would have been lost eternally by remaining a Musketeer, when his calling led him so powerfully toward the Church."

"My dear Bazin," replied D'Artagnan, "you ought to perceive, by the place in which you meet me, that I am totally changed. Age brings reason; and as I doubt not that your master is in the high road to salvation, I am come to ask you where he is, that he may assist me by his counsels in securing my own."

"Rather say, to lead him back with you into the world. Fortunately," continued Bazin, "I do not know where he is; and, as we are in a holy place, I should not dare to tell a lie."

"How!" said D'Artagnan, greatly disappointed; "you do not know where Aramis is?"

"In the first place," replied Bazin, "Aramis was his name of perdition; in Aramis you find Simara, which is the name of a demon; and, happily for him, he has done away with that name forever."

"Therefore," said D'Artagnan, determined to be patient to the last, "it is not Aramis that I am seeking, but the Abbé d'Herblay. Come, my dear Bazin, tell me where he is."

"Did you not hear, M. d'Artagnan, that I said I did not know?"

"Yes; but to this I reply that it is impossible."

"It is nevertheless true, sir, — the pure and simple truth."

D'Artagnan saw plainly that he should get nothing out of Bazin. It was quite clear that Bazin was lying; but he was lying with such fervour and determination, it was evident that he meant to stick to it.

"Very well," said D'Artagnan; "since you do not know where your master is, we will talk no more about it. Let us part good friends; take this half pistole to drink my health."

"I do not drink, sir," answered Bazin, pushing the officer's hand back in a most dignified manner; "it is only good for the laity."

"Incorruptible!" murmured D'Artagnan. "I am playing an unfortunate hand."

And as, while making this reflection, he had quitted his hold of Bazin's robe, the beadle took advantage of his liberty to

beat a rapid retreat into the sacristy, where he did not deem himself in safety until he had fastened the door behind him.

D'Artagnan remained motionless, with his eyes fixed on the door that had closed upon Bazin, when he felt some one touch him gently on the shoulder. He turned, and was about to utter an exclamation of surprise, when he who had touched him put his finger on his lips, as an injunction to silence.

"You here, my dear Rochefort!" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice.

"Hush!" said Rochefort; "did you know that I got away?"

"Yes, I knew it at first hand."

"And from whom?"

"From Planchet."

"What? From Planchet?"

"Certainly; it was he who liberated you."

"Planchet? Well, I fancied I recognised him. Now that proves, my dear fellow, that a benefit is never thrown away."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I came to thank God for my fortunate deliverance," answered Rochefort.

"And for what besides? — for I presume that is not all."

"And then to receive the coadjutor's orders, to see if we cannot irritate Mazarin a little."

"How rash! You will get yourself into the Bastille again."

"Oh! as for that, I will take precious good care, I warrant you. The free air of heaven is so delightful! Therefore," continued Rochefort, drawing a long breath, "I am going to take a turn into the country."

"And so am I," said D'Artagnan.

"And without being indiscreet, may I ask where you are going?"

"To search for my friends."

"What friends?"

"Those about whom you were asking yesterday."

"What, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? Are you searching for them?"

"Yes."

"'Pon honour?"

"And what is there astonishing in that?"

"Oh, nothing! Only it is droll. And who sets you searching for them?"

"Can't you imagine?"

"Of course I can."

"Unfortunately I do not know where they are."

"And you have no means of gaining intelligence of them Wait a week and I will give you some."

"A week! That is too long. I must find them befoi three days are past."

"Three days," said Rochefort; "that is but a short time, an France is large."

"Never mind. You know the word *must;* with that wor a great deal is accomplished."

"And when do you begin your search?"

"I have begun it."

"Success to you, then!"

"And a good journey to you!"

"Perhaps we may meet on our road?"

"'T is not very probable."

"Who knows? Fortune is so capricious."

"Adieu!"

"Au revoir! By the by, should Mazarin speak to you (me, tell him that I requested you to inform him that I should in a short time see that I was not too old for action."

And Rochefort left him, with one of those diabolical smil which had formerly made D'Artagnan so often shudder. B this time he beheld it without emotion, merely smiling in tur perhaps with an expression of melancholy which this rec lection naturally excited.

"Begone, demon!" said he, "and do what you will; it is little consequence to me. There is not a second Constance the world!"

On turning round D'Artagnan saw Bazin, who, having la aside his ecclesiastical habiliments, was talking to the sacrist whom D'Artagnan had addressed on entering the churc Bazin appeared to be very animated, and was making furio gestures with his little short fat arms. D'Artagnan realiz that he was doubtless enjoining the very greatest discretic with regard to himself.

Taking advantage of the preoccupation of the two churc men, he glided out of the cathedral, and placed himself ambush at the corner of the Rue des Canettes. Bazin cou not now leave the church without D'Artagnan perceiving him

Five minutes after, Bazin appeared under the porch. H

looked all around to see that he was not watched, but did not observe our officer, whose head alone appeared from the corner of a house fifty yards distant. Reassured by what he saw, he accordingly ventured into the Rue Notre Dame; and D'Artagnan emerged from his concealment just in time to see him turn the Rue de la Juiverie, and enter a house of very respectable appearance in the Rue de la Calandre. So our officer did not doubt that this was where the worthy beadle lodged.

D'Artagnan, however, took care not to make any inquiries there. The *concierge*, if there was one, no doubt had his instructions; and if there was not one, whom could he ask?

He therefore entered a small tavern at the corner of the Rue Saint Éloi and of the Rue de la Calandre, and asked for a measure of hypocras. It required a good half-hour to prepare this liquor properly; and during all this time D'Artagnan could watch Bazin without suspicion.

He remarked in the establishment a sharp-looking little rascal, of about twelve or thirteen years of age, whom he thought he had seen, about twenty minutes before, in the dress of a choir boy. He questioned him; and, as the embryo sub-deacon had no interest in dissimulation, D'Artagnan learnt that from six to nine in the morning he exercised the office of choir boy, and from nine to midnight that of tavern-waiter.

While he was talking with this boy, a horse was led up to Bazin's house. This horse was already saddled and bridled. A moment after, Bazin himself came down.

"Look!" said the boy; "there is our beadle just going to start."

"And where is he going in that fashion?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I am sure I do not know."

"Half a pistole, if you can find out," said D'Artagnan.

"For me?" demanded the boy, his eyes sparkling with delight. "If I can find out where M. Bazin is going? That will not be very difficult. But you are not making sport of me, are you?"

"No, on the honour of an officer. See, there is the half-pistole!" And he displayed the tempting coin, but without giving it to him.

"Well, I will go and ask him."

"And that is just the way to learn nothing about it," sa D'Artagnan. "Wait till he is gone, and after that pry abou inquire, and get your information. That is your business, a there is the half-pistole." And he put it into his pocket.

"I understand," said the boy, with that sharp and cunnir look characteristic of the Paris gamin. "Well, then, I wi wait."

He had not to wait long; five minutes afterwards Bazin s off at a slow trot, stirring his horse up by thumping him wit his umbrella. When on horseback, Bazin had always used h umbrella as a whip.

Scarcely had he turned the corner of the street, when tl boy launched himself like a bloodhound on his track.

D'Artagnan quietly seated himself, perfectly satisfied tha in ten minutes at least, he should know all he wanted. I fact, before that time had elapsed the boy returned.

"Well," said the boy, "I know it."

"And where is he gone?"

"But am I to have the half-pistole?"

"Certainly, when you have told me."

"I want to see it. Give me hold of it, that I may be ce tain it is not counterfeit."

"There it is."

"Master," said the boy, "the gentleman wants change."

The master, who was at his desk, gave the change and to the piece of money. The boy pocketed the change.

"And now where is he gone?" inquired D'Artagnan, wl was greatly amused by all these proceedings.

"He is gone to Noisy."

"And how do you know that?"

"Oh! it did not take much wit to find it out. I saw it w the butcher's horse, which he often lets to M. Bazin. No thinks I, the butcher does not let his horse without knowin where he is going, although I don't think M. Bazin capab of over-driving any horse."

"And he told you that M. Bazin"—

"Was going to Noisy. Besides, it seems that is his cu tom—he goes there two or three times a week."

"And do you know Noisy?"

"I should think so indeed—my nurse lives there."

"Is there a monastery at Noisy?"

"Yes, a precious fine one too!—a Jesuit monastery."

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "there's no more doubt about it."

"Then you are satisfied?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

"Friquet."

D'Artagnan took out his tablets and wrote the boy's name, with the address of the tavern.

"Tell me, sir," said the boy, "are there any more half-pistoles to be gained?"

"Perhaps so," replied D'Artagnan.

And as he had now got all he wanted, he paid for the hypocras, which he had not drunk, and returned quickly to the Rue Tiquetonne.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN, LOOKING FOR ARAMIS FAR AWAY, FOUND HIM ON THE CRUPPER, BEHIND PLANCHET.

On his return, D'Artagnan saw a man seated at the corner of the fire. It was Planchet; but Planchet so well metamorphosed, by some of the fugitive husband's old clothes, that he himself could hardly recognise him. Madeline introduced him before all the waiters; Planchet addressed him in a charming Flemish phrase; the officer answered him in a few words belonging to no language; and the business was settled. Madeline's brother entered into D'Artagnan's service.

D'Artagnan's plan was now completely arranged. He did not wish to reach Noisy in daylight, for fear he should be recognised; he had, therefore, plenty of time, as Noisy was not more than three or four leagues from Paris, on the road to Meaux.

He began by making a good substantial breakfast, which is a bad commencement when any one wishes to employ his head, but is an excellent precaution before any bodily exertion. Then he changed his dress, fearing that his lieutenant's uniform might breed distrust. Then he took the strongest and heaviest of his three swords, that he only used on great occasions; and at about two o'clock he had two horses saddled, and, followed by Planchet, left Paris by the barrier De la Villette. All this time a rigid search was being made for Planchet in the next house to the Hôtel de la Chevrette.

At a league and a half from Paris, finding that in his impatience he had set off too early, he stopped to breathe his horses. The inn was filled with people of rather doubtful appearance, who seemed intent upon some nocturnal adventure. A man enveloped in a cloak appeared at the door; but perceiving a stranger, he made a sign with his hand, and two of the men, who were drinking, left the house to speak to him.

D'Artagnan went carelessly up to the hostess, praised her wine, which was most horrible stuff made at Montreuil, asked her some questions about Noisy, and learnt that there were only two houses of any consequence in that village: one belonging to Monsignor the Archbishop of Paris, and now the residence of the Duchesse de Longueville, his niece; and the other a Jesuit monastery, which, according to custom, was the property of these worthy Fathers. Therefore, there was no danger of any mistake.

At four o'clock D'Artagnan resumed his journey at a foot-pace, for he did not wish to arrive till the night had closed in. Now as, when you travel on horseback, at a foot-pace, on a winter's day, in dull weather, and on a safe road, you have hardly anything better to do than what La Fontaine says a hare does when on its form, — that is, to ponder, — so D'Artagnan pondered; so did Planchet. Only, as will be seen, their thoughts were different.

One word spoken by the hostess gave a particular direction to D'Artagnan's thoughts; this word was the name of the Duchesse de Longueville.

In fact, Madame de Longueville had everything to make a man thoughtful. She was one of the greatest ladies in the realm, and one of the most beautiful women of the Court. Married to the old Duc de Longueville, whom she did not love, she had at first been considered the mistress of Coligny, who was killed for her sake, in a duel, on the Place Royale, by the Duc de Guise; then there had been gossip about a friendship a little too tender for her brother, the Prince de Condé; and finally it was rumoured that this friendship, which had scandalised the timorous souls of the Court, had been followed by a deep and genuine hatred; and now she had, it was said, some political connection with the Prince de Marsillac, the old Duc de la Rochefoucault's eldest son, whom she was in a fair way of making the enemy of her brother, the Prince de Condé.

rtagnan was thinking of all these things. He was
ng how he had often, when at the Louvre, seen the
ful Madame de Longueville pass before him, radiant and
ıg. He was thinking of Aramis, who, without being of
consequence than himself, had formerly been the lover
lame de Chevreuse, who was, at the former Court, what
ıe de Longueville was at this; and he asked himself
ıere are some persons in the world who are successful in
ey undertake — some in ambition, others in love —
here are others who remain, whether by chance, by bad
e, or by some natural impediment, stopped midway in
ourse toward the attainment of every hope.
was obliged to confess that, in spite of all her talent, in
f all her address, he was, and probably would continue
one of these last, when Planchet drew near and said:
vager, sir, that you are thinking of the same thing that

much doubt it, Planchet," said D'Artagnan, smiling;
what are you thinking of?"
am thinking, sir, of those ill-looking fellows who were
ıg in the inn where we stopped."
lways prudent, Planchet."
is by instinct, sir."
ell, come, let us hear what your instinct says in these
stances."
r, my instinct said that these people were collected to-
at that inn for some bad purpose; and I was reflecting
at my instinct told me, in the darkest corner of the
when a man enveloped in a cloak entered the stable,
ed by two others."
ıa!" said D'Artagnan, Planchet's account agreeing with
n observations; "well?"
ıe of these two men said: 'He must certainly be at
or come there this evening, for I recognised his ser-
— 'Are you quite sure?' said the man in the cloak.
s, Prince!'"
ince!" interrupted D'Artagnan.
s, 'Prince'! But now listen: 'If he should be there,
distinctly what we must do,' said the other man. —
must you do?' repeated the Prince. — 'Yes; he is
nan to allow himself to be taken in that manner — he
se his sword.' — 'Well. then, you must do as he does

Nevertheless, endeavour to take him alive. Have you some cord to bind him, and a gag?'—'Yes, we have everything ready.'—'Remember that he will, in all probability, be disguised as a private gentleman.'—'Oh, yes, monseigneur, you may be quite easy.'—'Besides, I shall be there, and will give you the proper instructions.'—'And you will insure us that justice'———'I am responsible for everything,' said the Prince.—'That is right, and we will do our best.' And on that they left the stable."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "and what has all this to do with us? It is one of those enterprises which take place every day."

"And you feel satisfied that it is not directed against us?"

"Against us? And why?"

"Consider their words: 'I recognised his servant,' one of them said; which might refer to me."

"And after that?"

"'He must be at Noisy, or come there this evening,' said the other; which might refer to you."

"And then?"

"Then the Prince said: 'Remember that in all probability he will be disguised as a private gentleman;' which does not appear to leave any doubt, for you are dressed as a private gentleman, and not as an officer of Musketeers. Well, what do you say to that?"

"Alas, my dear Planchet," said D'Artagnan, sighing deeply, "I say that, unfortunately, so far as I am concerned, the time is past when princes wish to assassinate me. Ah! those were fine times! Do not disturb yourself, therefore; those people have nothing to do with us."

"Are you quite sure, sir?"

"I will answer for it."

"Very well; let us not talk any more about it."

And Planchet resumed his place in the rear, with that profound confidence which he always had in his master, and which fifteen years' separation had not changed.

In this manner they went about a league, at the end of which Planchet again approached his master.

"Sir!" said he.

"Well?" answered D'Artagnan.

"Look that way, sir," continued Planchet. "Does it not appear to you that something like shadows are passing there

e midst of the darkness? Listen! It seems to me that ound of horses may be heard."
mpossible!" said D'Artagnan. "The ground is softened .e rains. And yet, as you say, I fancy I see something." he stopped to look and listen.
f we cannot hear the horses' steps, we can, at any rate, them neigh."
ıd, in fact, the neighing of a horse struck on D'Artagnan's hrough the darkness.
'hese are our men," said he, "who are now on the road. we have nothing to do with it. Let us proceed."
ıd they went on again. In about half an hour they reached .rst houses of Noisy. It was now between half-past eight ıine in the evening.
cording to country habits, every one had gone to bed, and light was to be seen in the village.
Artagnan and Planchet continued their route.
the right and left of the road, the dark and irregular line ofs cut sharp upon the dull sky. From time to time a barked behind a door, or a frightened cat ran quietly the middle of the street to take refuge in a pile of fag- whence her eyes glared like burning coals. These were nly living creatures that appeared to inhabit this village. out the middle of the town, overlooking the principal , rose a dark mass, standing between two lanes, in front ıich some enormous lime-trees spread their slender arms. tagnan examined this building with attention.
This must be the Archbishop's château," said he to Plan- "the abode of the beautiful Madame de Longueville. where is the monastery?"
'he monastery?" responded Planchet; "oh, that is at ınd of the village. I know it well."
Vell, then," said D'Artagnan, "there is just time, while I en my horse's girths, for you to gallop there, and to return ;ell me whether there is a light burning at any window in Jesuits' house."
anchet obeyed, and was instantly lost in the darkness; ə D'Artagnan dismounted and tightened his girths.
about five minutes Planchet returned. "Sir," said he, re is a single lighted window on the side looking toward ields."
Hum!" said D'Artagnan; "if I were a frondeur I should

knock here, and should be sure of a good bed. If I were a monk, I should knock down yonder, and should be sure of a good supper. But as I am neither, it is very possible that we may sleep on the hard ground, perishing of hunger and thirst."

"Yes," added Planchet, "like the famous ass of Buridan. In the meantime, would you like me to knock?"

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan. "The one window lighted up has just grown dark."

"Do you hear, sir?" inquired Planchet.

"Ah, what is that noise?"

It was, in effect, like the dull sound of an approaching storm. At the same moment, two troops of horsemen, each of about ten men, issued from the two lanes that bounded each side of the house, and, closing every avenue, surrounded D'Artagnan and Planchet.

"Heyday!" said D'Artagnan, drawing his sword and sheltering himself behind his horse, while Planchet executed the same manœuvre, "can you have divined truly, and do they really mean this against us?"

"There he is! We have him!" cried the horsemen, rushing towards D'Artagnan, sword in hand.

"Do not let him escape," said a commanding voice.

"No, monseigneur, you may depend on that."

D'Artagnan thought the time was now come for him to join in the conversation. "Hallo, gentlemen," said he, in his Gascon accent, "what do you want?"

"You shall soon know," shouted the horsemen in chorus.

"Stop, stop!" cried he whom they called "monseigneur;" "stop, on your lives! It is not his voice."

"Aha, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "are you peradventure crazy here at Noisy? Only take care of yourselves; for I warn you that the first man who comes within the reach of my sword, and it is a pretty long one, will have it through his body."

The leader came up.

"What are you doing here?" demanded he, in a haughty voice, as of one accustomed to command.

"And what are *you* doing here?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Be civil, or you shall be well curried; for although I may not wish to give my name, I will be respected, as my rank demands."

"You do not wish to give your name, because you are lead-

ing an ambush; but I, who am quietly travelling with my servant, have not the same reasons for concealing mine."

"Enough! enough! What is your name?"

"I tell my name that you may know where to find me, sir, monseigneur, or prince, by whichever of these titles you are pleased to be called," said our Gascon, who did not wish to appear to yield to a threat. "Do you know M. d'Artagnan?"

"Lieutenant of the King's Musketeers?" inquired the voice.

"The same."

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, you must have heard that he has a strong wrist and a sharp sword?"

"You are M. d'Artagnan?"

"I am."

"Then you are come here to defend him?"

"Him!— and what him?"

"Him whom we seek."

"It seems," said D'Artagnan, "that while I thought I was coming to Noisy, I have entered the kingdom of riddles unwittingly."

"Come, answer!" cried the same haughty voice; "are you waiting for him under this window? Did you come to Noisy to defend him?"

"I am waiting for no one," replied D'Artagnan, who was beginning to lose his temper. "I mean to defend no one but myself; and myself I will defend vigorously, I assure you."

"Very well, then," said the voice, "go along with you, and leave the place free for us."

"Leave this place?" continued D'Artagnan, with whose plans this order interfered; "it is no such easy matter, seeing that I and my horse are overwhelmed with fatigue; unless, indeed, you feel disposed to offer me a supper and a bed in the neighbourhood."

"Rascal!" exclaimed the voice.

"Sir! regulate your language a little, I beg of you; for if you use a second term like that, were you a marquis, duke, prince, or king, I will make you swallow it again, do you hear?"

"Come, come," said the leader, "there is no mistake. It is really a Gascon who is speaking, and, consequently, not the person we are looking for. Our plan has failed for this evening; let us retire. We shall meet again, Maître d'Artagnan," added the leader, raising his voice.

"Yes; but never under the same advantages," replied the Gascon, bantering him; "for when you meet me again, perhaps you will be alone, and it may be daylight!"

"Very well — very well!" said the voice. "Forward, gentlemen!"

And the troop, murmuring and grumbling, disappeared in the darkness, going toward Paris.

D'Artagnan and Planchet remained a moment on the defensive; but as the sound lessened, they sheathed their swords.

"You see clearly, you fool," said D'Artagnan, with the greatest coolness, "that they had no quarrel with us."

"But who else?" asked Planchet.

"Faith, I know not; neither do I care. What I want is to get into the Jesuits' monastery; so mount your horse and go and knock there. Come what may, in the devil's name they will not eat us!"

And D'Artagnan vaulted into his saddle again.

Planchet had just done the same, when an unexpected weight fell on the hind part of his horse, which almost gave way under it.

"Oh, sir," cried Planchet, "there is a man behind me!"

D'Artagnan turned, and saw, in fact, two human forms on Planchet's horse.

"So then it is the devil following us!" said he, drawing his sword and preparing to charge the intruder.

"No, my dear D'Artagnan," answered this intruder, "it is not the devil; it is I — it is Aramis! Gallop on, Planchet; and at the end of the village, turn to the left."

And Planchet, carrying Aramis on the crupper, set off at a gallop, followed by D'Artagnan, who began to fancy that he was in some incoherent and fantastic dream.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABBÉ D'HERBLAY.

At the end of the village Planchet turned to the left, as Aramis had desired him, and stopped under the window that had a light in it. Aramis jumped down and clapped his hands three times. Instantly the window opened and a rope ladder was let down.

y dear fellow," said Aramis, "if you will mount I shall ighted to receive you."
h!" cried D'Artagnan, "is that the way you enter your ?"
fter nine at night it is necessary, by God! The monas- ules are monstrous severe."
ardon me, my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan; "I imag- hat you said 'by God'!"
o you think so?" replied Aramis, laughing. "It is le. You cannot conceive, my dear fellow, how one gets ad habits in these cursed monasteries, and what bad rs all those Churchmen have with whom I am obliged ociate. But you do not ascend."
o first, and I follow you."
s the late Cardinal said to the late King—'to show you ay, Sire.'"
mis nimbly mounted the ladder, and in an instant had d the window.
rtagnan mounted after him, but more gently. It was erceptible that this kind of road was less familiar to him o his friend.
beg your pardon," said Aramis, seeing his friend's awk- ess; "had I foreseen your visit, I would have had the ier's ladder; but for myself alone this is quite suffi-

r," said Planchet, when he saw that his master had accomplished his ascent, "this is all very well for M. s, and for you also; and, indeed, it would do very well e, but — the two horses cannot mount the ladder."
ad them under that shed," said Aramis, pointing to a ng on the plain; "you will there find some straw and or them."
it for myself?" inquired Planchet.
ou will return under this window, clap your hands three and we will let down some provisions for you. Make lf easy, my good fellow; no one dies of hunger here.

l Aramis, drawing the ladder after him, shut the window. rtagnan examined the room. Never had he seen an nent more warlike and at the same time more elegant. ch corner were military trophies, offering to the sight ie hand swords of every kind; while four large pictures

represented the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Cardinal Lavalette, and the Archbishop of Bordeaux, all in their warlike costume. Nor was there anything else that at all indicated the abode of an abbé. The hangings were of damask; the carpet came from Alençon; and the bed, especially, was more like that of a coquette, with its furniture of lace and its embroidered coverlet, than that of a man who had made a vow to reach heaven by self-denial and mortification of the flesh.

"You are inspecting my den, are you?" said Aramis. "Ah, my dear fellow, excuse me; what would you have? I am lodged like a hermit. But what are you looking for?"

"I want to know who threw you the rope ladder. I can see no one; and yet the ladder could not descend by itself."

"No — it was Bazin."

"Aha!" said D'Artagnan.

"But," continued Aramis, "M. Bazin is a well-drilled servant, who, seeing that I did not return alone, discreetly retired. Sit down, my dear friend; let us have some talk." And Aramis pushed a large easy-chair towards D'Artagnan, on which he reclined most comfortably.

"In the first place, you will sup with me, will you not?" said Aramis.

"Yes, if you really wish it," replied D'Artagnan; "and I confess that it will be with great pleasure, for the ride has given me an infernal appetite."

"Ah! my poor friend," said Aramis, "you will find but meagre fare here, for you were not expected."

"And I am threatened with an omelette de Crevecœur, and with 'theobromes'? — was not that the name you gave to the spinach?"

"Oh! we may hope," replied Aramis, "that, by the assistance of God and Bazin, we shall find something better in the larder of the good Jesuits. Bazin, my friend," continued Aramis, "come hither."

The door opened and Bazin appeared; but on seeing D'Artagnan, he uttered what seemed like a cry of despair.

"My dear Bazin," said D'Artagnan, "I am delighted to see with what perfect coolness you lie, even in a church."

"Sir," replied Bazin, "I have learnt from the good Jesuit Fathers that it is allowable to lie, when it is done with a good purpose."

"Very well — very well, Bazin. M. d'Artagnan is dying with hunger, and I also. Therefore, give us the best supper you can; and, more especially, let us have some good wine."

Bazin bowed in token of obedience, heaved a deep sigh, and left the room.

"Now that we are alone, my dear Aramis," said D'Artagnan, turning his eyes from the apartment to its inhabitant, and terminating his examination by observing his dress, "tell me where the deuce you came from when you dropped on to Planchet's crupper?"

"Zounds!" replied Aramis; "from heaven of course."

"From heaven!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, shaking his head. "You have as little of the appearance of one just come from heaven as you have of one who is likely ever to go there!"

"My dear friend," said Aramis, with an air of conceit which D'Artagnan had never perceived while he was a Musketeer, "if I did not come from heaven, at all events I came from paradise — which is much the same thing."

"Then the learned have at length settled the question," replied D'Artagnan. "Up to this time they could not agree as to the precise situation of paradise. Some placed it on Mount Ararat; others, between the Tigris and the Euphrates; but it seems that they looked for it a great way off, when it was very near. Paradise is at Noisy-le-Sec, on the site of the château of the Archbishop of Paris. The way to leave it is not by the door, but by the window; you must descend, not by the marble steps of a peristyle, but by the branches of a linden-tree; and the angel with the flaming sword which guards it has changed his heavenly name from that of Gabriel to the more earthly one of the Prince de Marsillac."

Aramis burst out laughing.

"You were always a pleasant companion, my dear," said he, and you have not lost your witty Gascon humour. Yes, there is some little truth in what you say. Only do not leap to the conclusion that I am in love with Madame de Longueville."

"Plague on it! I will take good care of that," cried D'Artagnan. "After having been so long in love with Madame de Chevreuse, you could not possibly have transferred your affections to her bitterest enemy!"

"Yes, that is true," replied Aramis, in a careless manner. "Yes, the poor duchess — I loved her very much formerly; and to give her her due, she was mighty useful to us. But

what would you have? She was obliged to leave Fr
That cursed Cardinal was such a rough adversary!" conti
Aramis, casting a glance at the former minister's portrat;
had given orders to arrest her, and to carry her to the c
of Loches. Faith, he would have cut off her head, as he
for Chalois, Montmorency, and Cinq-Mars, had she
escaped, disguised as a man, with that poor little Kitty.
a strange adventure happened to her in some village,
have heard, with some parish curé whose hospitality
demanded, and who, having only one chamber, and taking
for a gentleman, offered to share it with her. She certa
wore a man's dress in a most credible manner, our dear M
I know only one woman who does it as well, therefore
following couplet has been made upon her:

"*Laboissière, dis-moi!*

Do you know it?"

"No; sing it, my dear."

And Aramis began in a most gallant manner:

"*Laboissière dis-moi*
Suis-je pas bien en homme?
'*Vous chevauchez, ma foi,*
Mieux que tant que nous sommes.'
Elle est
Parmi les hallebardes
Au régiment des gardes
Comme un Cadet."[1]

"Bravo!" cried D'Artagnan. "You sing as well as
my dear Aramis; and I find that the Mass has not sp
your voice." . . .

"My dear," answered Aramis, "you understand w
I was a Musketeer I mounted guard as seldom as possi
and now that I am an abbé I say as few Masses as I
But let us return to our poor duchess."

"Which? The Duchesse de Chevreuse or the Duchess
Longueville?"

"My dear, I have told you that there is nothing between

[1] Laboissière, tell me
Do I not look well dressed like a man!
"You stride your steed
Better than we indeed."
She is
Among the halbardiers
In the regiment of the Guards
Like a Cadet.

the Duchesse de Longueville; a little flirtation possibly, ng more. No, I was speaking of the Duchesse de Che- e. Did you ever see her on her return from Brussels the King's death?"

'es, certainly; and she was still very beautiful."

'es," continued Aramis; "therefore I saw her sometimes at period, and gave her some excellent advice, of which id not take advantage. I assured her that Mazarin was ueen's lover. But she would not believe me, saying that new Anne of Austria, and that she was too proud to love a puppy. Then she threw herself into the Duc d'Beau- cabal, and that puppy caused the Duke to be arrested, and hed Madame de Chevreuse."

'ou know, I suppose," said D'Artagnan, "that she has ned permission to return?"

'es; and that she is returned. She will be again com- ng some folly."

But this time, perhaps, she will follow your advice."

h! this time," said Aramis, "I have not seen her; she is ly changed."

'his is not the case with you, my dear Aramis, for you are he same: you have got the same handsome black hair, ame elegant figure, and the same delicate hands."

'es," answered Aramis, "I take care of myself. Do now, my dear, I am getting old? I am almost thirty- ."

'ow, as we have met, my dear," said D'Artagnan, smiling, us settle one thing: that is, the age we shall be for the e."

What do you mean?" asked Aramis.

Vhy," replied D'Artagnan, "formerly I was two or three younger than you, and, if I am not mistaken, I have leted my fortieth year."

Ieally?" said Aramis. "Then I must be mistaken; for vere always an admirable mathematician. By your ac- , therefore, I must be forty-three years old. The devil, evil! My dear fellow, you must not go and tell this at Hôtel de Rambouillet; it would do me great harm."

Be assured that I will not go there," said D'Artagnan.

But what can that animal, Bazin, be doing?" cried Aramis. ick, then, you rascal! We are going mad of hunger and st."

Bazin, who entered at this moment, raised his hands, filled with bottles, up to heaven.

"Are you ready at last?" demanded Aramis.

"Yes, sir, directly," answered Bazin; "but it requires some time to bring up all these"—

"Because you fancy that you have got your beadle's gown on your shoulders," broke in Aramis, "and that you pass all your time in reading your breviary. But I warn you that if, from being always engaged polishing all those things in the chapel, you neglect to furbish up my sword, I will make a great fire of all your blessed images, and roast you alive with them."

Bazin, much scandalised, made the sign of the cross with one of the bottles. D'Artagnan, more than ever surprised at the tone and manners of the Abbé d'Herblay, which were so different from those of Aramis the Musketeer, remained with his eyes fixed in open astonishment on his face.

Bazin quickly covered the table with a damask cloth, and on it arranged so many delicate, delicious, and tempting things that D'Artagnan was quite astounded.

"But you must have been expecting some one?" said the officer.

"Oh!" cried Aramis, "I have always something in case of need; besides, I knew that you were looking after me."

"From whom?"

"From Bazin, who took you for the devil, my dear, and who hastened here to warn me of the danger that threatened my soul if I received such bad company as an officer of Musketeers."

"Oh, sir!" cried Bazin, joining his hands with an air of entreaty.

"Come, no hypocrisy! You know that I do not like it. You would do much better to open the window and lower some bread, a chicken, and a bottle of wine to your friend Planchet, who has been killing himself for the last hour with clapping his hands."

In fact, Planchet, after having fed his horses, had returned to the window, and had three or four times repeated the signal agreed upon.

Bazin obeyed, fastened the articles mentioned to the end of a cord, and lowered them to Planchet, who, desiring nothing more, retired with them into the shed.

ow let us sup," said Aramis.
: two friends placed themselves at table, and Aramis to cut up a fowl, some partridges and ham, with true nomic skill.
.ague take it," said D'Artagnan, "how you live!"
es, pretty well. The coadjutor procured me a dispensa- rom Rome for fast days, on account of my health. Then ıust know I have taken for my cook the ex-cook of La- e, the Cardinal's old friend, that famous gourmand, who ace after dinner always said, "Good Lord, grant power est all I have eaten!"
'hich did not prevent his dying of indigestion," said agnan.
'hat would you have?" replied Aramis, with an air of ation. "No one can avoid his destiny."
'ill you pardon me, my dear," said D'Artagnan, "for the on I am about to ask you?"
h, you know there can be no ceremony between us."
re you, then, become rich?"
h, by no means. I make about twelve thousand livres a independent of a small benefice of a thousand crowns the Prince gave me."
nd how do you make this twelve thousand livres a " inquired D'Artagnan. "By your poems?"
o; I have renounced poetry, except occasionally that :e a drinking song, or some love sonnet, or innocent epi- I make sermons, my dear."
ermons?"
h, yes, prodigious sermons, do you see, — at least, they ınsidered so."
'hich you preach?"
o — which I sell."
ɔ whom?"
ɔ those of my brethren who are ambitious of being ht fine preachers."
h, really! And have you not been tempted to gain the reputation for yourself?"
es, my dear fellow; but nature carries the day. When I the pulpit, if a pretty woman looks at me, I look at her ; if she smiles, I smile; then speak at random, and, ıd of talking of the torments of hell, I speak of the joys radise. See, now, what happened to me one day at the

Church of St. Louis-au-Marais. A gentleman laughed in m face. I left off, to tell him that he was a fool. The peopl went out to pick up stones; but, in the meantime, I so change the feelings of the assembly that they stoned the gentlema It is true, he called upon me the next day, thinking he had t do with an abbé of the common stamp."

"And what was the result of this adventure?" inquire D'Artagnan, holding his sides with laughter.

"Why, that we made an appointment for the next da on the Place Royale; and, pardieu, you know something abo that."

"And did I serve as your second against that impertine fellow?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Exactly so. You saw how I settled his business."

"And did he die?"

"I have not the least idea. But, at all events, I gave hi absolution *in articulo mortis!* It is enough to kill the bo without killing the soul."

Bazin made a sign of despair, which meant that he approv of the morality, but not of the tone in which it was uttered.

"Bazin, my friend," said Aramis, "you do not observe th I can see you in the mirror, and that I have strictly forbidd any sign of approbation or disapprobation. You will, ther fore, do me the pleasure of putting the Spanish wine on to t table and retiring to your own apartment. Besides, my frien M. d'Artagnan has something confidential to say to me. Is not so, D'Artagnan?"

D'Artagnan nodded in assent, and Bazin retired, after ha ing placed the Spanish wine upon the table.

The two friends being alone remained a few minutes silen Aramis appeared to be waiting for a soft digestion. D'Art gnan was preparing his exordium. Each cast a furtive glan at the other.

Aramis first broke the silence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TWO GASPARDS.

"WHAT are you thinking of, D'Artagnan?" said he, "and hich of your thoughts makes you smile?"

"I am thinking, my dear, that while you were a Musketeer ou always had a leaning toward the abbé; and now that you re an abbé you appear to me to incline much towards the lusketeer."

"It is true," replied Aramis, laughing. "Man, you know, ıy dear D'Artagnan, is a strange animal — a complete system f contradictions. Since I have become an abbé, I dream of othing but battles."

"That is evident enough by your furniture: you have words of every description, and suited to the most fastidious ıstes. Do you fence as well as ever?"

"Yes; I fence as you did formerly — perhaps even better. do nothing else all day."

"And with whom?"

"With a most excellent fencing-master that we have here."

"What! Here?"

"Yes, here, in this monastery, my dear. There are some f all sorts in a Jesuit monastery."

"Then you would have killed M. de Marsillac if he had ɔne alone to attack you, instead of with his twenty men?"

"Most assuredly," replied Aramis; "and even at the head f his twenty men, if I could have drawn my sword without eing recognised."

"God forgive me!" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "but believe that he has actually become more Gascon than ıyself." Then he added aloud, "Well, my dear Aramis, you sked me why I was seeking for you."

"No," said Aramis, in his shrewd manner, "I did not ask ɣou; but I am waiting for you to tell me."

"Well, then, I was seeking frankly for you to offer you the neans of killing M. de Marsillac when you like, prince though he be."

"Come, come," said Aramis; "that is an idea!"

"Of which I invite you to take advantage, my dear. Come — with your *benefice* of a thousand crowns and the

twelve thousand livres that you make by your sermons — are you rich? Answer me frankly."

"I? No, I am as poor as Job; and if you thoroughly rummaged my pockets and coffers, I verily believe that you could not find a hundred pistoles."

"Plague take it! — a hundred pistoles," said D'Artagnan to himself, "and that he calls being as poor as Job! If I had so much always at hand, I should consider myself as rich as Crœsus."

Then D'Artagnan inquired.

"Are you ambitious?"

"As Enceladus!"

"Well, then, my friend, I give you the opportunity of becoming rich, powerful, and free to do anything you wish."

The shadow of a cloud passed across Aramis's forehead as rapidly as that which moves over a field of corn in the month of August; but, rapid as it was, it did not escape D'Artagnan's observation.

"Speak," said Aramis.

"One more question first. Are you engaged in politics?"

A flash glanced from Aramis's eyes as rapidly as the cloud that had passed across his brow; but this, also, did not escape D'Artagnan.

"No," replied Aramis.

"Therefore, any propositions would suit you, as you have for the time being no other master than God," said the Gascon, laughing.

"It is possible."

"Have you, my dear Aramis, sometimes thought of those bright days of our youth, which we passed amid laughter, drinking, and fighting?"

"Yes, certainly; and more than once I have regretted them. It was a happy time! — *Delectabile tempus!*"

"Well, then, my dear, those bright days may be renewed — that happy time may return. I have received a commission to go and find my companions; and I wished to begin with you, who were the soul of our association."

Aramis bowed in a manner that was more polished than affectionate. "To lead me back to politics," said he in a languishing voice, and throwing himself back in his easy-chair. "Ah! my dear D'Artagnan, you see what a regular and easy

lead; and we have, as you well know, experienced the
.titude of the great."
t is true," replied D'Artagnan; "but perhaps the great
ıt of their ingratitude."
n that case," said Aramis, "it would be quite another
. There is pardon for every sin. Besides, you are right
.e point, which is that if one felt any desire to mingle in
s of State, the time is just ripe for it."
.nd how do you know that — you who are not engaged
.litics?"
.h, mon Dieu, without engaging personally in them, I live
:ircle which is much occupied with them. While culti-
g poetry, while making love, I am connected with M.
in, who is most intimate with M. de Conti; with M.
.re, who is the friend of the coadjutor; and with M. de
Robert, who, since he no longer belongs to Cardinal
.lieu, is attached to no one, or to all the world, whichever
like; so that the political movement has not entirely
ed me."
suspected so," said D'Artagnan.
.esides, my dear, do not take all I am going to say
y for the words of a cenobite — of a man who speaks
ın echo, by purely and simply repeating what he has
," continued Aramis. "I have heard that, at this
:nt, the Cardinal Mazarin is very much disturbed by the
ırance of affairs. It seems that his orders do not com-
that respect which was formerly paid to those of our
ıt bugbear, the late Cardinal, whose picture you see here;
·hatever may be said of him, it must be confessed, my
that he was a great man."
will not contradict you on that point, my dear Aramis.
ade me a lieutenant."
[y first impression," continued Aramis, "was entirely in
r of the Cardinal. I said to myself, a minister is never
; but with the talent which he confessedly has, he will
y triumph over his enemies and make himself feared,
ı, in my opinion, is perhaps better than being loved."
Artagnan gave a nod, which signified that he wholly
ved this doubtful maxim.
ou see," continued Amaris, "what was my first opinion;
s I am profoundly ignorant on such subjects as these,
s the humility which I profess compels me not to trust

to my own judgment, I made inquiries. Well, then, my dear friend"—

"Well, and what then?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Well, then," replied Aramis, "I must mortify my pride and confess that I was mistaken."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; as I have said, I made inquiries, and the answers which I have received from many persons, all of different tastes and pursuits, have satisfied me that M. de Mazarin is not a man of genius, as I at first imagined."

"Bah!" cried D'Artagnan.

"No; he is a man of no consideration, who was the servant of Cardinal Bentivoglio, and has thrust himself forward by intrigue; an upstart, a nameless man, who, in France, will only act as a partisan. He will heap up loads of wealth, will much dilapidate the King's revenues, will put into his own pocket the pensions which the late Cardinal de Richelieu dispensed to every one, but will never govern firmly, nobly, and honourably. It appears, also, that this minister is no gentleman either in manners or at heart, but a sort of buffoon, a Punchinello, a Pantalon. Do you know him? I have not that pleasure."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "there is some truth in what you say."

"Well, you flatter me extremely, my dear, if, gifted as I am by nature with a certain vulgar penetration, I can agree with such a man as you, who are living at Court."

"But you have spoken of him personally, and not of his party and resources."

"That is true. He has the Queen with him."

"That is something, I think."

"But he has not the King on his side."

"A mere boy."

"Yet a boy who will attain his majority in four years."

"But it is of the present time that I speak."

"Yes, but not the future. And even at present, he has neither the parliament nor the people for him, and that means the money; neither the nobility nor the princes, and that means the sword."

D'Artagnan scratched his ear. He was obliged to confess to himself that this was not only an enlightened but a correct view of affairs.

"Judge now, my dear friend, whether I still possess my usual penetration. But perhaps I am wrong in speaking so openly to you, who appear to me to have a leaning toward Mazarin."

"I!" exclaimed D'Artagnan; "not the least in the world."

"But you were speaking of some service."

"Did I speak of some service? Then I was wrong. No; I said to myself, as you did, — affairs are getting embroiled; let us throw the feather into the air, and follow whither the wind blows. Let us resume our life of adventure. We were four valiant knights — four hearts warmly united. Let us again unite — not our hearts, for they have never been separated, but our fortunes and courage. The opportunity is favourable to gain something better than a diamond."

"You are right, D'Artagnan; always right," continued Aramis; "and the proof is, that I had the same idea; only, not having your nervous and fertile imagination, it was suggested to me. Every one now wants auxiliaries. Propositions have been made to me. Something has transpired about our famous exploits of old; and I will frankly tell you that the coadjutor has applied to me."

"What, M. de Gondy, the Cardinal's enemy?" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"No; but the King's friend," replied Aramis, "the King's friend, understand. Well, the point would be to serve the King; that is also the duty of a gentleman."

"But the King is with Mazarin, my dear."

"In fact, but not in mind; in appearance, but not at heart; and that is exactly the snare which is laid for the poor boy by his enemies."

"Come, now, but this is civil war which you are honestly proposing to me, my dear Aramis."

"War for the King."

"But the King will be at the head of the army, where Mazarin is."

"But his heart will be with the army, which will be commanded by M. de Beaufort."

"M. de Beaufort! Why, he is at Vincennes."

"Did I say M. de Beaufort?" inquired Aramis. "M. de Beaufort or some other person — M. de Beaufort or the Prince."

"But the Prince is going to the army, and is entirely devoted to the Cardinal."

"I fear," said Aramis, "that there are some discussions between them just at this time. But if not the Prince, it will be M. de Gondy."

"But M. de Gondy will soon be a cardinal; they are now trying to get him the biretta."

"Well, are there not very warlike cardinals? Behold! There are around you four cardinals who, at the head of armies, equalled M. de Guébriant or M. de Gassion."

"But a humpbacked general!"

"Under his cuirass his hump will not be seen. Besides, do you not remember that Alexander was lame and Hannibal had but one eye?"

"And do you perceive great advantages in this party?"

"I perceive the protection of powerful princes!"

"With the proscription of the Government."

"Annulled by the parliaments and the opposition."

"All this might happen as you say, if they could manage to separate the King from his mother."

"Perhaps that may happen."

"Never!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, this time speaking from conviction. "I appeal to you, Aramis, — to you, who know Anne of Austria as well as I do. Do you think that she can ever forget that her son constitutes her safety, her palladium, the pledge of her consideration, her fortune, and her life? She must rather pass over with him to the party of the princes, abandoning Mazarin; but you know, better than any one, that there are potent reasons why she should never forsake him."

"Perhaps you are right," said Aramis thoughtfully; "therefore I will not enter into any engagement."

"With them," said D'Artagnan; "but with me?"

"With no one. I am a priest; what have I to do with politics? I do not read my breviary. I have a small circle of jolly, witty abbés, and of charming women; and the more disturbed affairs become, the less noise my escapades will make. Everything, therefore, goes on marvellously well, without my being mixed up with it; and decidedly, dear friend, I will have nothing to do with it."

"Well, my dear Aramis," said d'Artagnan, "upon my honour, your philosophy makes a convert of me, and I know not what devil of an ambitious mania had seized me. I have a commission which supports me. At the death of poor M. de Tréville, who is getting old, I may become captain. It is a very excel-

rshal's bâton for a Gascon cadet; and I find that I am
l to the charms of a humble but daily bread. There-
tead of seeking for adventures I will accept the invita-
Porthos; I will go and hunt on his estate. You know
rthos has estates?"
, indeed, I believe I do. Ten leagues of forest, marsh,
ey. He is lord of the hill and of the plain; and is
vith the Bishop of Noyon on account of some feudal

d!" said D'Artagnan to himself. "That is just what
d to ascertain — Porthos is in Picardy." Then he
loud, "And he has resumed his old name of Du
"
which he has annexed that of De Bracieux, an estate
by my faith, was formerly a barony."
hat we shall see Porthos a baron?"
o not doubt it. The Baroness Porthos will be more
ly admirable."
wo friends laughed heartily.
l so you do not wish to join Mazarin?" said D'Arta-
a final tentative.
you the princes?"
Let us join no one, then, and continue friends; let
ither Cardinalists nor frondeurs."
," said Aramis, "let us be Musketeers."
n with the little collar," exclaimed D'Artagnan.
e especially with the little collar," said Aramis, "for
t which constitutes the charm of it."
d-by, then," said D'Artagnan.
ill not detain you, my dear," replied Aramis, "since I
give you a bed here; and I cannot decently offer you
Planchet's shed."
ides, I am scarcely three leagues from Paris; the
are refreshed, and in less than an hour I can reach

D'Artagnan poured himself out a last glass of wine.
our days of old," said he.
," responded Aramis; "unfortunately, it is time long
ne by; *fugit irreparabile tempus*." . . .
!" replied D'Artagnan, "perhaps it will return. At
its, if you should want me, Rue Tiquetonne, Hôtel de
rette."

"And I at the Jesuit monastery — by the door from six in the morning to eight at night, and by the window from eight at night to six in the morning."

"Good-by, my dear!"

"Oh! I do not part with you thus. Let me attend you."

And he took up his sword and cloak.

"He wishes to be assured of my departure," said D'Artagnan to himself.

Aramis whistled for Bazin; but Bazin was sleeping in the antechamber, over the remnants of the supper, and Aramis was obliged to pull him by the ear to awaken him.

Bazin stretched his arms, rubbed his eyes, and endeavoured to go to sleep again.

"Come, come, master sleeper — quick — the ladder!"

"Why," said Bazin, yawning as if he would dislocate his jaw, "the rope ladder is still at the window."

"The other — the gardener's. Did you not perceive that M. d'Artagnan could scarcely mount? He will, therefore, have much greater difficulty in descending."

D'Artagnan was just going to assure him that he could get down very well, when an idea entered his head; this idea made him hold his tongue.

Bazin heaved a profound sigh as he went out to look for the ladder. A moment after, a strong, steady wooden ladder was fixed against the window.

"Come, now," said D'Artagnan, "that is what I call a means of communication; even a woman could get up such a ladder as that."

A penetrating glance shot from Aramis's eye, as if it wished to search the bottom of his friend's heart; but D'Artagnan sustained the scrutiny with an admirable look of innocence.

Besides, at that moment he was putting his foot on the first step of the ladder and beginning to descend.

In another moment he was on the ground. Bazin remained at the window.

"Remain there," cried Aramis; "I shall return directly."

They went toward the shed; and at their approach Planchet came out, holding the two horses by the bridle.

"Excellent!" said Aramis. "There is an active and vigilant servant; not like that lazy Bazin, who is really worth nothing since he has become a Churchman. Follow us, Planchet. We will talk till we reach the end of the village."

In fact, the two friends conversed on indifferent subjects while they traversed the whole village. Then, when they reached the last houses —

"Go, then, dear friend," said Aramis; "follow your career. Fortune smiles on you; let her not escape. Remember that she is a jilt, and treat her accordingly. As for me, I remain in my humility and my indolence. Adieu!"

"So it is perfectly decided," said D'Artagnan; "what I offered does not suit you?"

"On the contrary, it would suit me mighty well if I were like any other man," replied Aramis; "but I repeat that I am, in truth, a combination of contradictions: what I hate to-day I may adore to-morrow; and *vice versâ*. You perceive that I could not engage like yourself, for example, who have fixed principles."

"You lie, you rogue," said D'Artagnan to himself; "you are, on the contrary, the only one who knows how to make choice of an object, and to proceed toward it in mysterious hidden ways."

"Good-by, then, my dear," continued Aramis, "and thanks for your kind intentions; and, more than all, for the pleasing recollections which your presence has awakened in me."

They embraced. Planchet was already on horseback, and D'Artagnan mounted in turn. Then they again shook hands, the horsemen spurred their horses and went off towards Paris.

Aramis remained motionless in the middle of the street until they were out of sight.

But after having proceeded about two hundred paces D'Artagnan stopped short, jumped down, threw his bridle to Planchet, and took his pistols from the holsters and placed them in his belt.

"What is the matter, sir?" inquired Planchet, much frightened.

"Why, the matter is," answered D'Artagnan, "that, cunning as he is, it shall not be said that I am his dupe. Remain here. Do not stir. Only put yourself on the other side of the road and wait for me."

With these words D'Artagnan jumped over the ditch by the roadside and ran across the plain, so as to skirt the village. He had noticed, between the house which Madame de Longueville inhabited and the monastery, an open space closed only by a hedge.

Perhaps he would have had some difficulty, an hour before, in finding this hedge; but the moon had just risen, and although it was occasionally hidden by clouds, he could see sufficiently to find his way, even when it was obscured.

D'Artagnan therefore gained the hedge, and concealed himself behind it. On passing the house, before which the scene we have described took place, he remarked that there was again a light at the same window, and he was convinced that Aramis had not yet gone back, and that when he went back he would not be alone.

In fact, in a few minutes he heard approaching steps and the sound of voices speaking low.

At the end of the hedge the steps ceased.

D'Artagnan put one knee to the ground, trying to conceal himself behind the thickest part of the hedge.

Just at this moment, to his great astonishment, two men appeared; but his astonishment soon ceased, for he heard a soft and harmonious voice: one of these persons was a woman disguised as a man.

"Do not distress yourself, my dear René," said the soft voice; "the same thing will not occur again. I have discovered a kind of subterranean passage leading under the street, and we shall only have to raise one of the flagstones which are before the door to open for you an entrance and an exit."

"Oh!" said another voice, which D'Artagnan recognised as Aramis's, "I swear, Princess, that if your reputation were not at stake, and that I hazarded only my life"—

"Yes, yes, I know that you are as brave and adventurous as any man in the world. But you do not belong to me alone; you belong to our party. So be prudent, be cautious."

"I am always obedient, madame," answered Aramis, "when I receive commands in such a sweet voice."

And he tenderly kissed her hand.

"Ah!" exclaimed the cavalier with the soft voice.

"What?" demanded Aramis.

"Do you not see that the wind has carried off my hat?"

Aramis rushed after the fugitive felt. D'Artagnan took advantage of this circumstance to seek for a thinner place in the hedge, through which he might more clearly see this mysterious cavalier. Just at this moment also, the moon, perhaps as curious as the officer, came from behind a cloud, and by its *im*prudent light D'Artagnan recognised the large blue eyes,

the golden hair, and the noble head of the Duchesse de Longueville.

Aramis returned laughing, with one hat on his head and another in his hand, and they both went toward the Jesuit monastery.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan, getting up and brushing his knee; "now I have you; you are a frondeur and Madame de Longueville's lover."

CHAPTER XII.

M. PORTHOS DU VALLON DE BRACIEUX DE PIERREFONDS.

THANKS to the information which he had gained from Aramis, D'Artagnan knew that Porthos, whose family name was Du Vallon, had added to it that of De Bracieux, from the name of his estate, and that on account of this estate of Bracieux he was at law with the Bishop of Noyon. Therefore, he had to look for this estate in the vicinity of Noyon; that is, on the borders of the Isle of France and of Picardy.

His route was quickly settled. He would go to Dammartin, whence two roads branched out: one leading to Soissons, the other to Compiègne. There he would gain some information about the De Bracieux estate, and, according to that information, he would either go straight forward or turn to the left.

Planchet, who was not yet quite at his ease respecting the prank he had played, declared that he would follow D'Artagnan to the end of the world, whether he went straight forward or turned to the left; only he entreated his master to set off in the evening, being more likely to avoid detection in the dark. D'Artagnan then advised him to send his wife information of his safety, to relieve her anxiety; but Planchet answered, with much sagacity, that he was quite certain that his wife would not die of anxiety from not knowing where he was; while he, being perfectly aware of the glibness and laxity of her tongue, would inevitably die of anxiety if she did know it.

These reasons seemed so cogent that D'Artagnan did not further press his recommendation; and about eight o'clock in the evening, just as the *fog* began to spread over the streets,

he left the Hôtel de la Chevrette, and, followed by Planchet, issued forth from the capital by the Porte Saint Denis.

By midnight the travellers were at Dammartin. It was too late to make any inquiries. The host of the *Cygne de la Croix* was in bed. D'Artagnan, therefore, deferred everything until the following day.

Next morning he sent for the host. He was one of those crafty Normans who answer neither yes or no, and who always think that they compromise themselves by giving a direct answer. D'Artagnan, therefore, merely understanding that he must go straight forward, again took the road on this equivocal information. At nine in the morning he was at Nanteuil, where he stopped to breakfast. Here the host was an honest, open-hearted Picard, who, finding that Planchet was his countryman, did not hesitate in giving the information required. The estate of De Bracieux was some leagues from Villers-Cotterets.

D'Artagnan knew Villers-Cotterets, which was at this period a royal residence, whither, on two or three occasions, he had followed the Court. He therefore proceeded toward this town, and dismounted at his usual inn, the *Dauphin d'or*. The information here became most satisfactory: he learnt that the estate of De Bracieux was situated four leagues from the town, but that Porthos must not be sought for there. Porthos had been having some disputes with the Bishop of Noyon concerning the estate of Pierrefonds, which bounded his own; and, fatigued by all these legal disputes which he could not understand, he had, to terminate them, bought Pierrefonds; so that he had added this new appellation to his other titles, and now styled himself Du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds, and was living on his new property. In default of any other title, Porthos was evidently aiming to be Marquis of Carabas.

They were obliged again to wait till the morrow. The horses had travelled ten leagues during the day, and were tired. They might have taken others, it is true; but they had to pass through a large forest, and Planchet, it may be remembered, did not like forests at night.

There was another thing, also, which Planchet did not like: and that was, to set out fasting. So when he awoke D'Artagnan found his breakfast ready, and as he could not complain of such an attention he placed himself at table. It is to be understood that Planchet, on resuming his former functions,

had also resumed his former humility, and was not more ashamed of eating the remnants of D'Artagnan's meals than Madame de Motteville and Madame de Fargis were of eating those of Anne of Austria.

They could not, therefore, set out until about eight o'clock. It was impossible to make any mistake; they had only to follow the road that leads from Villers-Cotterets to Compiègne, and on leaving the forest to turn to the right.

It was a beautiful spring morning; the birds were singing in the tall trees, and the broad rays of the sun shot across the glades, resembling curtains of gilded gauze. In other spots the light scarcely penetrated the thick leafy vaults, and the stems of the old oaks (up which the active squirrels were running, frightened by the travellers) were plunged in shadow. From the herbs, leaves, and flowers breathed forth a delicious morning perfume, gladdening the heart of man. D'Artagnan, tired of the fœtid odors of Paris, thought to himself that any one bearing the names of three estates must be very happy in such a paradise. Then he shook his head, saying, "If I were Porthos, and D'Artagnan came to make me the proposition which I am going to make Porthos, I know very well the answer I should give D'Artagnan."

As for Planchet he had no thoughts: he was digesting.

At the extremity of the wood, D'Artagnan perceived the road indicated; and at the end of the road, the towers of an enormous feudal castle.

"Oh, ho!" he murmured; "I should fancy that this castle belonged to the elder branch of the Orléans family. Has Porthos been dealing with the Duc de Longueville?"

"Faith, sir," said Planchet, "here are lands in good order. If they belong to M. Porthos, I must congratulate him."

"Zounds!" cried D'Artagnan; "do not call him Porthos, or even Du Vallon. You must call him either De Bracieux or De Pierrefonds, otherwise you will make my embassy fail."

As they drew near the castle which had attracted their observation, D'Artagnan perceived that his friend could not reside there. The towers, although solid and apparently built only yesterday, were open, as if gutted; it seemed as if some giant had riven them with a hatchet.

Having reached the end of the road, D'Artagnan found that it commanded a view of a charming valley, at the bottom of which, and at the extremity of a pretty little lake, were

scattered a few humble cottages, some covered with tiles and others with thatch, and all seeming to acknowledge as their feudal superior a handsome château, built about the commencement of the reign of Henry IV., and surmounted by the seigniorial weather-cocks.

D'Artagnan did not now doubt that he saw the abode of Porthos.

The road led in a straight line to this handsome château, which, compared with its ancestor, the Château de la Montagne, was like a fop in the Duc d'Enghien's train, by the side of a barbed knight of the times of Charles VII. D'Artagnan put his horse to a trot, and followed the road, Planchet regulating his pace by that of his master.

At the end of ten minutes D'Artagnan found himself entering a beautiful poplar-lined avenue terminating in an iron gate, the spikes and transverse bars of which were gilded. In the middle of this avenue they saw a sort of seigneur, dressed in green and gold like the gate, and mounted on a stout stallion. On his right and left were two valets, laced at every seam; and a considerable number of poor people were paying him the most respectful attention.

"Ah!" cried D'Artagnan, "can this be the Seigneur du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds? Mon Dieu! How he is shrivelled up since his name was Porthos!"

"It cannot be him, sir," said Planchet, answering D'Artagnan's thought. "M. Porthos was nearly six feet, and this man is scarcely five."

"And yet," said D'Artagnan, "they are treating this gentleman with great respect."

At these words D'Artagnan hastened toward the large horse, the great man, and his valets. As he approached him, he fancied that he recognised the features of this personage.

"Oh, Lord, sir," cried Planchet, who also thought that he recollected him, "can it possibly be him?"

At this exclamation the man on horseback gently and in a most majestic manner turned his head, and the two travellers could perceive the redoubtable Mousqueton with his great eyes shining in all their brightness, his rosy face, and his eloquent smile.

It really was Mousqueton — Mousqueton, fat as butter, overflowing with health, and puffed out with good living — who, on seeing D'Artagnan, unlike that hypocrite Bazin, let him-

self gently glide from his horse, and, hat in hand, went up to the officer, so that the homage of the assembled crowd was transferred to this new sun, which was eclipsing the former one.

"M. d'Artagnan! M. d'Artagnan!" cried Mousqueton from his enormous cheeks; he was actually perspiring with delight. "M. d'Artagnan! Oh, what joy for my lord and master, M. du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds!"

"Ah, Mousqueton, then your master is here?"

"You are on his domains, sir!"

"But how splendid you are — how fat and flourishing you are grown!" continued D'Artagnan, thus commenting on the wondrous changes which good fortune had wrought on the ancient starveling.

"Ah, yes, God be thanked, sir," said Mousqueton, "I am pretty well."

"But have you nothing to say to your old friend Planchet?"

"To my friend Planchet! And is it you, Planchet?" exclaimed Mousqueton, with open arms and eyes filled with tears.

"Myself," answered the prudent Planchet; "but I wished to be certain that you were not become proud."

"Proud to mine ancient friend? Never, Planchet! You could not think so, or — you do not know Mousqueton."

"Well and good!" returned Planchet, dismounting, and in turn opening his arms to Mousqueton. "You are not like that cur, Bazin, who left me two hours under a shed, without even pretending to remember me."

And Planchet and Mousqueton embraced with an affection that touched all the spectators, and made them believe that Planchet was some nobleman in disguise, so highly did they estimate Mousqueton's exalted position.

"And now, sir," said Mousqueton, when he had released himself from the embrace of Planchet, who had vainly endeavoured to join his hands behind his friend's back, — "and now, sir, permit me to leave you, for I do not wish my master to learn the news of your arrival from any one but myself. He would never pardon me if I allowed it to precede me."

"My dear friend, therefore," said D'Artagnan, not giving Porthos either his ancient or his modern name, "has not for-

"Forgotten you!" exclaimed Mousqueton; "there is not a day, sir, in which we have not expected to hear that you were named a marshal, either in the place of M. de Gassion or of M. de Bassompierre."

D'Artagnan gave one of those melancholy smiles which had outlived, in the depths of his heart, the false and fleeting hopes of his youthful days.

"And you, clowns," continued Mousqueton, "remain near M. le Comte d'Artagnan, and pay him every respect, while I apprise monseigneur of his arrival."

And mounting his robust steed by the assistance of two charitable souls, while the more nimble Planchet mounted his without assistance, Mousqueton took a gentle gallop on the turf, evidently thinking more of the ease of his own back than of his horse's legs.

"Ah, this is a good beginning," said D'Artagnan. "No mysteries, no cloaks, no politics here; but, in their stead, hearty laughter and tears of joy. I see nothing but faces an ell wide. Really, nature herself appears to be welcoming us; and instead of leaves and flowers, one might almost fancy that the trees are covered with green and red ribands."

"And I," said Planchet, "think that I perceive the most delectable odour of roast meat — I fancy that I see the scullions ranged in order to mark our approach. Ah, sir, what a cook must M. de Pierrefonds have — he who loved good living so much when he was called M. Porthos."

"Halt there!" said D'Artagnan. "You alarm me! If the reality equals the appearance, I am lost. A man who is so happy will never forsake his enjoyments; and I shall fail here, as I did with Aramis."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN DISCOVERED, DURING HIS VISIT TO PORTHOS, THAT FORTUNE DOES NOT ENSURE HAPPINESS.

D'Artagnan passed through the gate, and found himself opposite the château; he had just dismounted, when a gigantic personage appeared on the steps. Let us do D'Artagnan the justice to say that apart from all feeling of egotism his heart beat with delight on seeing that lofty and martial figure, which reminded him of a brave and excellent man.

He ran to Porthos and threw himself into his arms. The whole establishment of lacqueys, ranged in a circle at a respectful distance, looked on with humble curiosity; while Mousqueton, in front, was wiping his eyes, for the poor fellow had been crying with joy ever since he first saw D'Artagnan and Planchet.

Porthos took his friend by the arm.

"Ah! what joy again to see you, dear D'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, in a voice which, from a baritone, had become bass; "so you have not forgotten me?"

"Forget you! Oh, dear Du Vallon, can we forget the bright days of our youth and old devoted friends, and the perils we have confronted together? Really, on seeing you every instant of our former friendship recurs to my memory."

"Yes, yes," said Porthos, endeavouring to restore that coquettish twist to his mustache which it had lost in his retirement, "yes, we did perform some fine actions in our time, and gave but a ruffled skein to that poor Cardinal to unravel."

And he heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan looked at him.

"At any rate," continued Porthos, in a languishing tone, "you are most welcome, my dear friend. You will assist me to recover my happiness. To-morrow we will hunt the hare in my plains, which are superb, or the roebuck in my woods, which are magnificent. I have four of the swiftest greyhounds in the province, and a pack unequalled for twenty miles round."

And Porthos heaved another sigh.

"Oh, ho," thought D'Artagnan to himself, "is my gay lad less happy than he seems?"

Then he said aloud: "But first you must introduce me to Madame du Vallon, for I recollect a certain kind letter of invitation which you sent me, and at the bottom of which she was so obliging as to add a few lines."

Porthos gave a third sigh.

"I lost Madame du Vallon two years ago," said he, "and you see me yet in affliction. It was for that I quitted my Château du Vallon, near Corbeil, to come and live on my estate of De Bracieux, which induced me to make this purchase. Poor Madame du Vallon! She was not a woman of very even temper," continued Porthos, making a grimace of regret, "but she at last became accustomed to my ways, and would give in to my small wishes."

"Therefore you are rich and free?" said D'Artagnan.

"Alas!" replied Porthos, "I am a widower, and have an income of forty thousand livres. Come, let us breakfast. Will you?"

"Indeed I will," said D'Artagnan. "The morning air has given me an appetite."

"Yes," said Porthos, "my air is excellent."

They entered the château. There was nothing but gilding from top to bottom; the cornices were gilt, the mouldings were gilt, the wood of the easy-chairs was gilt.

There was a table ready covered.

"You here see," said Porthos, "my usual breakfast."

"Ah!" cried D'Artagnan, "I compliment you! The King has not so good a one."

"True," said Porthos; "I have heard that M. de Mazarin feeds him but badly. Taste this cutlet, my dear D'Artagnan; it is of my own mutton."

"You have very tender mutton," said D'Artagnan, "and I congratulate you upon it."

"Yes, they are fed on my pastures, which are excellent."

"Give me another."

"No, take a piece of this hare, which I shot yesterday in one of my warrens."

"What a flavour!" cried D'Artagnan; "do you feed your hares on nothing but wild thyme?"

"And what do you think of my wine?" inquired Porthos. "It is agreeable, is it not?"

"It is charming."

"And yet it is of home growth."

"Really!"

"Yes, a little store to the south yonder, on that hill of mine — it produces about twenty hogsheads."

"But it is a regular vintage!"

Porthos sighed for the fifth time. D'Artagnan had counted his sighs.

"But, my dear friend," said he, curious to solve this problem, "it seems as if something distressed you; perhaps you are not well — Is your health" —

"Excellent, my dear fellow — better than ever. I could kill an ox with a blow of my fist."

"Then some family distress or other" —

"Family! Happily, I have but myself."

What, then, is it that makes you sigh?"
[y dear," said Porthos, "I will be frank with you: I am
appy."
ou not happy, Porthos! You who have a château, past-
mountains, woods — you who have an income of forty
and livres a year — you are not happy!"
[y dear, I have all this, but I am solitary in the midst
"
h! I understand. You are surrounded by peasants, whom
annot visit without lessening your own consequence."
rthos slightly changed color and swallowed an enormous
of his small wine.
[o," said he, "on the contrary. Imagine to yourself a set
untry gentlemen, all of whom have some title or other,
who pretend to spring from Pharamond and Charlemagne,
the very least, from Hugh Capet. At the beginning, as
the last arrival, I had to make the first advances. I
nake them; but you know, my dear, that Madame du
n"—
rthos, on uttering these words, appeared to have some
ılty in swallowing.
'he nobility of Madame du Vallon's ancestry," continued
ıos, "was rather doubtful. I do not think I gave you any
nation that you did not know before, D'Artagnan, when
you that her first husband was an attorney. They con-
ɔd that disgusting. They said disgusting, — that was the
— and you can comprehend that it was a word which
t make one kill thirty thousand men. I did kill two;
lthough that made the others hold their tongues, it did
ıake them my friends. So that I have no society. I live
; I am weary of my life; and my mind preys upon
"
Artagnan smiled; he saw the defect in the armour, and
ıred his blow.
But, after all, you are yourself their equal, and your wife
ɔt degrade you."
Yes, but you understand, not being of that historical
ɛsse like the Coucy, who were contented to remain *sires*,
the Rohans, who would not be made dukes, all these
y, who are either viscounts or counts, take precedence of
t church, at functions, everywhere in the ceremonies, and
ı say nothing. Ah! if I were only" —

"A baron — is it not so?" said D'Artagnan, finishing the sentence for his friend.

"Ah!" exclaimed Porthos, whose features lighted up, "ah, if I were a baron!"

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "I shall succeed here. Well, then, my dear friend," he said aloud, "the title you wish for I come to bring you to-day."

Porthos gave a jump that shook the whole room; three or four bottles lost their balance and fell to the ground, where they were broken. Mousqueton ran in at the noise; and in the perspective, Planchet was seen with his mouth full and a napkin in his hand.

"Did monseigneur call?" inquired Mousqueton.

Porthos made him a sign to pick up the broken bottles.

"I am delighted to see," said D'Artagnan, "that you still have that good fellow with you."

"He is my steward," said Porthos. Then elevating his voice: "He has done pretty well, the rascal, that is plain enough; but," in a lower key, "he is attached to me, and nothing would induce him to leave me."

"And he calls him 'monseigneur,'" thought D'Artagnan.

"Leave the room, Mouston," said Porthos.

"You say Mouston? I suppose for sake of abbreviation. Mousqueton was too long to pronounce."

"Yes," replied Porthos; "and, besides, you might smell the quartermaster a league off. But we were talking of business when that rascal came in," continued Porthos.

"Yes," said D'Artagnan; "yet we had better defer our conversation. Your people might suspect something, and there may also chance to be spies in this country. You understand, Porthos, that affairs of the very greatest consequence are at stake."

"Zounds!" cried Porthos. "Very well, then, to promote digestion let us take a turn in my park."

"Willingly."

And as both had taken enough of breakfast, they began to make the tour of a splendid garden. Alleys of chestnuts and linden trees enclosed a space of about thirty acres; the end of each avenue was thick with copse-wood and shrubs, in which the rabbits were seen running about, vanishing among the beech trees and sporting in the long grass.

"Faith!" said D'Artagnan, "the park corresponds with

everything else; and if there are as many fish in your lake as there are rabbits in your warrens, you are a happy man, my dear Porthos, provided that you have still the same love of shooting, and have also acquired that of fishing."

"My friend," said Porthos, "I leave the fishing to Mousqueton. It is a vulgar amusement. But I sometimes shoot; that is, when I am tired of doing nothing I seat myself on one of these marble benches, I send for my gun, and for Gredinet, my favourite dog, and I shoot rabbits."

"Well, that is very amusing," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes," replied Porthos, with a sigh, "it is very amusing."

D'Artagnan did not count the sighs any longer.

"Then," continued Porthos, "Gredinet goes for them, and carries them himself to the cook; he is trained to that."

"Ah! the charming little creature!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"But," resumed Porthos, "let us leave Gredinet, whom I will give you if you'd like him, for I begin to be tired of him, and let us return to our business."

"Willingly," said D'Artagnan. "Only I warn you, my dear friend, that you may not say that I have deceived you, that it will be necessary for you entirely to change your mode of life."

"And how is that?"

"To resume your armour, to gird on your sword, to run after adventures, to leave, as of old, some portion of your skin on the road; in fine, you know our old ways."

"Ah, the devil!" cried Porthos.

"Yes, I understand. You are spoiled for action, my dear friend. You have run to stomach, and the wrist has not now that elasticity of which the Cardinal's Guards had such severe proofs."

"Ah, the wrist is yet good, I assure you," replied Porthos, stretching out a hand as big as a shoulder of mutton.

"So much the better."

"Then we are to make war — are we?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure."

"And against whom?"

"Have you been following the politics of the day, my friend?"

"I? Not in the least."

"Then are you for Mazarin or for the princes?"

"I? I am not for any one."

"That is to say, that you are for us. So much the better, Porthos; it is an excellent position to profit by circumstances. Well, then, my dear, I will tell you that I am come from the Cardinal."

This word had an effect upon Porthos similar to what it would have had in the year 1640, and if the matter had concerned the true Cardinal.

"Oh, ho!" cried he; "and what does his Eminence want with me?"

"His Eminence wishes to have you in his service."

"And who mentioned me to him?"

"Rochefort. Do you remember him?"

"Yes, by Jove! He who gave us so much trouble, and who made us travel about so much — whom you wounded three times, as he well deserved."

"But are you not aware that he is become our friend?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"No, I did not know it. So he does not bear malice?"

"You are mistaken, Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "I do not."

Porthos did not clearly comprehend this distinction; but it may be remembered that comprehension was not his strong point.

"You say, therefore," he continued, "that it was the Comte de Rochefort who spoke to the Cardinal about me?"

"Yes; and then the Queen."

"What! The Queen?"

"To inspire us with confidence, she has placed in Mazarin's hand that famous diamond, you know, which I sold to M. des Essarts, and which, somehow, came again into her possession."

"But it seems to me," observed Porthos, with his plain good sense, "that she would have done better to give it back to you."

"That is also my opinion," said D'Artagnan; "but what would you have? Kings and queens have often singular fancies; and, after all, as they are the persons who hold riches and honours, and who dispense wealth and titles, we are devoted to them."

"Yes, we are devoted to them," said Porthos; "therefore, you are devoted at this present time"—

"To the King, the Queen, and the Cardinal; and more than that, I have answered for your devotion."

"And you say that you have made certain conditions for me?"

"Magnificent, my dear, magnificent! In the first place, you have money, have you not? An income of forty thousand livres, as you told me."

Porthos began to be a little suspicious.

"Ah, my friend," said he, "one has never too much money. Madame du Vallon left an involved inheritance. I am no great scholar, so that I live rather from day to day."

"He fears that I am come to borrow money of him," thought D'Artagnan. "Ah, my friend," said he aloud, "if you are in difficulties, so much the better."

"Why so much the better?" demanded Porthos.

"Because his Eminence will give all you want — land, money, and titles."

"Ah, ah, ah!" cried Porthos, opening his eye at the last word.

"Under the other Cardinal," continued D'Artagnan, "we did not know how to take advantage of fortune. That was really the case — I do not say as to you, for you had your forty thousand livres income in perspective, and appeared to me to be the happiest man on earth."

Porthos sighed.

"However, in spite of your forty thousand livres income," continued D'Artagnan, "or, rather, perhaps on account of your forty thousand livres income, it seems to me that a coronet would look very well on your carriage, eh?"

"Why — yes," said Porthos.

"Well then, win it, my dear; it is at the end of your sword. We shall not interfere with each other: your object is a title; mine is money. If I can win enough to enable me to rebuild Artagnan, which my ancestors, impoverished by the Crusades, have ever since allowed to fall into ruin, and to purchase about thirty acres around it, it is all I require. I will then retire and die in peace."

"And I," said Porthos, "wish to be a baron."

"You shall be one."

"And have you not thought of our friends?" demanded Porthos.

"Yes, I have seen Aramis."

"Well, and what does he want? — to be a bishop?"

"Aramis," said D'Artagnan, not wishing to destroy his friend's illusions, — "Aramis, you must understand, my dear, is become a monk and a Jesuit, and lives like a bear. He

renounces everything, and only thinks of his salvation. My offers could bring him to no decision."

"So much the worse," said Porthos, "for he was a man of talent. And Athos?"

"I have not yet seen him; but on quitting you I shall go and visit him. Do you know where I can find him?"

"Near Blois, on a small estate which he inherited from some relation."

"And what name does it bear?"

"Bragelonne. Do you understand, my dear, what Athos, who was as noble as the Emperor, and who inherits an estate carrying with it the title of count, — what can he do with all those countships — Count de la Fère, Count de Bragelonne?"

"And with all that he has no children," said D'Artagnan.

"Oh!" said Porthos, "I have heard of a young man whom he had adopted, and who, it is said, much resembles him in countenance."

"Athos! our Athos! who was as virtuous as Scipio. Do you ever see him?"

"No."

"Well, I will go to-morrow and carry him some news about you. Between ourselves, I fear that his love of wine may have much aged and degraded him."

"Yes," said Porthos, "it 's true he drank very hard."

"Then he was also the eldest of us," said D'Artagnan.

"By a few years only," replied Porthos; "but his grave air caused him to look much older."

"Yes, that 's true. Therefore, if we can get Athos, so much the better; if not, why we must do without him. We two alone are worth a dozen."

"Yes," said Porthos, smiling at the recollections of his ancient exploits; "but we four should be worth thirty-six; more especially as you say the affair is rather difficult."

"Difficult for recruits, but not for us."

"Will it be of long continuance?"

"Why, yes; it may last three or four years."

"Shall we have much fighting?"

"I hope so."

"So much the better, after all, — so much the better!" exclaimed Porthos. "You can have no idea how my bones snap and crack since I have been here. Sometimes on a Sunday, when I come from Mass, I ride over the meadows and fields of

my neighbours, to pick up some good little quarrel, — for I perceive that I want it, — but I find nothing, my dear. Whether they respect or fear me, which last is perhaps the most probable, they let me trample down their lucerne with my dogs, ride full gallop over every one, and I return quite tired of doing nothing. That is the truth. But tell me, is it easier to fight in Paris now ? "

" As for that, my dear, it is quite delightful. No more edicts, no Cardinal's Guards, and no more Jussacs, or other police spies. Mon Dieu ! do you see under a lamp in a tavern, in short anywhere, 'Are you for Mazarin ?' 'Are you a frondeur ?' swords are drawn and all is settled. M. de Guise killed M. de Coligny openly in the Palace Royale, and no notice was taken of it."

" Ah, that is right ! " said Porthos.

" And then in a short time," continued D'Artagnan, " we shall have pitched battles, cannon, and conflagrations; there will be great variety."

" Then I am determined."

" I have your word, then ? "

" Yes, it is settled. I will thrust and cut — for Mazarin. But "—

" But what ? "

" He will make me a baron ? "

" Ah, pardieu, yes," said D'Artagnan; " that is agreed upon as a preliminary. I told you so, and I repeat it — I will answer for your barony."

On the faith of this promise, Porthos, who had never doubted his friend's word, returned with him to the château.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN THAT ALTHOUGH PORTHOS WAS GREATLY DISSATISFIED WITH HIS LOT, MOUSQUETON WAS VERY WELL CONTENTED WITH HIS.

As he returned to the château, and while Porthos was dreaming about his barony, D'Artagnan was reflecting on poor human nature, always discontented with what it possesses, and ever desirous of obtaining what it has not. In Porthos's place, D'Artagnan would have considered himself the happiest man

on earth. And to make Porthos happy, he wanted — what? Five letters to place before all his names, and a coronet to be painted on the panels of his carriage.

"So I shall pass all my life," said D'Artagnan to himself, "in looking on every side without ever seeing the face of a man who was completely happy."

He was just making this philosophical reflexion when Providence seemed as if it wished to give him the lie. At the moment that Porthos left him to give some orders to his cook he saw Mousqueton coming toward him. The worthy fellow's face, except for a slight shade of distress, which, like a summer cloud, threw a gauze rather than a veil over it, was a picture of happiness.

"There is what I was looking for," said D'Artagnan to himself; "but, alas! the poor fellow does not know why I am come."

Mousqueton kept aloof, but D'Artagnan seated himself on a bench and beckoned him to approach.

"Sir," said Mousqueton, taking advantage of this permission, "I have a favour to ask of you."

"Speak, my friend," said D'Artagnan.

"I dare not, sir. I fear lest you should think that prosperity has spoiled me."

"You are happy, then, my friend?" said D'Artagnan.

"As happy as it is possible to be; and yet you may make me happier still."

"Speak, then, and if it depends on me it is done."

"Oh, sir, it wholly depends on you."

"I am listening."

"Sir, the favour I ask is, that you would no more call me Mousqueton, but Mouston. Since I have had the honour of being monseigneur's steward, I have taken this last name, which is more noble, and makes me more respected by my inferiors. You know yourself, sir, how necessary subordination is among lackeys."

D'Artagnan smiled. Porthos was elongating his names, Mousqueton was shortening his.

"Well, sir?" said Mousqueton, trembling with anxiety.

"Well, yes, my dear Mouston," answered D'Artagnan; "make yourself perfectly easy. I will not forget your request; and, if it will give you pleasure, I will not address you as anything but Mouston."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mousqueton, colouring with pleasure, "if you would do me such an honour, sir, I shall be grateful all my life. But perhaps it would be too much to ask?"

"Alas!" said D'Artagnan to himself, "it is but very little in exchange for the unexpected miseries which I bring upon this poor devil, who has received me so kindly."

"And will you remain long with us?" inquired Mousqueton, whose countenance, restored to complete serenity, glowed like a peony.

"I leave you to-morrow, my friend," answered D'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir," cried Mousqueton, "you only came, then, to make us regret your visit."

"I fear so," said D'Artagnan, but in so low a tone that Mousqueton, who was just making his parting bow, could not hear him.

A species of remorse penetrated D'Artagnan's heart, indurated as it was. He did not regret engaging Porthos in a course where his life and fortune would be staked, for Porthos willingly hazarded all this for his baronial title, which he had for fifteen years been anxious to acquire. But Mousqueton, who desired nothing but to be called Mouston, — was it not very cruel to snatch him from his delicious life, from his granary of abundance? This idea was completely absorbing his thoughts when Porthos reappeared.

"To dinner!" said Porthos.

"To dinner?" responded D'Artagnan. "Why, what time is it?"

"Well, my dear, it is past one o'clock."

"Your abode is a paradise, Porthos. It makes one forget time. I follow you; but I am not hungry."

"Come along. If we cannot always eat, at any rate we can always drink. That is one of poor Athos's maxims the truth of which I have found out since I have become wearied of doing nothing."

D'Artagnan, kept very temperate by his Gascon disposition, did not appear so much convinced of the truth of Athos's axiom as his friend. He did what he could, however, to keep himself upon an equality with his host.

Yet, while he watched Porthos eating and while he drank as much as he could, the recollection of Mousqueton would intrude on D'Artagnan's mind; and the more so as Mousqueton, without actually waiting on them, — for that would have been

derogatory to his new dignity, — was occasionally seen at the door, betraying his gratitude to D'Artagnan by the age and quality of the wines which he caused to be served. Therefore when, at the dessert, on a sign from D'Artagnan, Porthos had dismissed his servants and the two friends found themselves alone —

"Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "who will accompany you in your campaigns?"

"Why, Mouston, to be sure," answered Porthos, quite naturally.

This was a severe blow for D'Artagnan, who already, in imagination, saw the kindly smiles of the steward changed to melancholy grimaces.

"And yet, my dear," said D'Artagnan, "Mouston is no longer in his first youth. Besides, he is grown enormously fat, and has probably lost the habit of active service."

"I know that," answered Porthos, "but I am accustomed to him; and, besides, he would not like to leave me; he loves me too much for that."

"Oh, blind self-love!" thought D'Artagnan.

"Besides, you yourself," continued Porthos, "have you not still the same lacquey with you — that brave and good, that intelligent — what do you call him?"

"Planchet — yes, I have found him again. But he is no longer a lacquey."

"What is he, then?"

"Why, with the sixteen hundred livres that he gained, you know, at the siege of La Rochelle, by carrying that letter to Lord de Winter, he has opened a small shop in the Rue des Lombards, and he is a pastry-cook."

"Ah, he is a pastry-cook in the Rue des Lombards? But how is it that he is with you now?"

"He has played some prank," answered D'Artagnan, "and is afraid of being called to account for it."

And the Musketeer told his friend how he had found Planchet again.

"Well, well," continued Porthos, "who would have foretold, my dear, that one day Planchet would save Rochefort, and that you would conceal him for it?"

"I should not have believed him. But what would you have? Events change men."

"Nothing more true," said Porthos. "But what does not

change, or, rather, what changes for the better, is wine. Taste this; it is Spanish, or that quality which our friend Athos much esteemed — it is Xeres."

At this moment the steward came in to consult his master on the bill of fare for the next day, and also respecting a proposed hunting-party.

"Tell me, Mouston," said Porthos, "are my arms in a good state?"

D'Artagnan began beating the time under the table to conceal his confusion.

"Your arms, monseigneur?" said Mouston. "What arms?"

"Why, my armour, to be sure."

"What armour?"

"My war armour."

"Why, yes, monseigneur, — at least, I think so."

"You will ascertain to-morrow whether it to be so, and you will have it polished up should it be necessary. Which is my best race-horse?"

"Vulcan."

"And which the toughest?"

"Bayard."

"And which horse do you prefer?"

"I prefer Rustaud, monseigneur; he is a good beast, to whom I am thoroughly accustomed."

"He is strong, is he not?"

"Norman, crossed with Mecklenburg. He would go from morning till night."

"That will just do. You will get these three horses into good condition; you will furbish, or cause to be furbished up, my armour; and, moreover, pistols and a hunting-knife for yourself."

"We are going to travel, then, monseigneur?" said Mousqueton, beginning to be somewhat disturbed.

D'Artagnan, who had as yet only drummed some indeterminate measures, here beat a regular march.

"Better than that, Mouston," replied Porthos.

"We are going on an expedition, I suppose, sir?" said the steward, whose roses began to fade into lilies.

"We are going to resume service, Mouston," replied Porthos, vainly endeavouring to make his mustache regain the martial curl that it had lost.

These words were scarcely uttered, before Mousqueton was

seized with a fit of trembling that actually shook his mottled cheeks. He cast an indescribable glance of tender reproach at D'Artagnan, which that officer could not support without feeling himself much affected; then he staggered back, and in a suffocating voice —

"Service!" cried he; "service in the King's army?"

"Yes and no. We are about to take the field again to seek for all sorts of adventures, and, in short, to resume the life of olden times."

Those last words fell like a thunderbolt on Mousqueton's ears. It was those terrible times of old which made the present so sweet.

"Oh, my God! what do I hear?" exclaimed Mousqueton, casting even a more supplicating glance than the former at D'Artagnan.

"What would you have, my poor Mouston?" demanded D'Artagnan. "Fate" —

In spite of the care that D'Artagnan had taken to address him respectfully, and to give his name that brevity which he aspired to, Mousqueton did not feel the blow the less severely; and it was so terrible that he left the room completely overcome, and forgot even to shut the door.

"Our good Mousqueton! He could not contain himself for joy," said Porthos, in the exact tone we may fancy Don Quixote to have told Sancho to saddle his ass for his last campaign.

The two friends, being now alone, began to talk of the future, and to build a thousand castles in Spain. Mousqueton's excellent wine made them see most brilliant prospects — to D'Artagnan of double and single pistoles; and to Porthos, the blue riband and the ducal mantle. The fact is that they were asleep at the table when a servant came to get them to go to bed.

Nevertheless, the next day Mousqueton was a little comforted by D'Artagnan, who told him that the war would probably be at Paris, within reach of the Château Du Vallon, which was near Corbeil; or of De Bracieux, which was near Melun; or of Pierrefonds, which was between Compiègne and Villers-Cotterets.

"But I fancy that in old times" — said Mousqueton timidly.

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "they do not now make war as they did in old times. To-day they are diplomatic affairs. Ask Planchet about it."

ısqueton went for information to his old friend, who con-
. all that D'Artagnan had said. "Only in this war," he
, "the prisoners run the risk of being hanged."
ɔunds!" cried Mousqueton; "I think I should much pre-
ɜ siege of La Rochelle."
thos, after having made his guest kill a roebuck, and
having led him from his woods to his mountain and
his mountain to his fish ponds, — after having shown
ıis greyhounds, his pack, Gredinet, and all he possessed,
ıving given him three more sumptuous repasts, — he asked
finite instructions from D'Artagnan, who was obliged to
his way.
bserve, my dear friend," said the ambassador; "I must
our days to go from here to Blois, one to remain there,
hree or four to return to Paris. Set off, therefore, in a
with your equipment. You will go to the Rue Tique-
, the Hôtel de la Chevrette, and there await my return."
hat is settled," said Porthos.
ow, I am going on a fruitless expedition to Athos. But
ıgh I expect to find him become perfectly inefficient, some
.eration must be paid to our friends."
I were to go with you," said Porthos, "it might amuse

ɔssibly," replied D'Artagnan, "and me also; but then
ould not have time for your preparations."
ıat is true," said Porthos. "Go, then, and with good
ɟe. As for me, I am full of ardour."
ıpital!" said D'Artagnan.
l they separated on the boundaries of the Pierrefonds
, to the extreme limits of which Porthos wished to con-
ıis friend.
t least," said D'Artagnan, taking his way toward Villers-
ets, — "at least I shall not be alone. That devil of a
, Porthos, is still in magnificent vigor. If Athos comes
ıll be three, to laugh at that little monkish lover, Aramis."
Villers-Cotterets he wrote to the Cardinal:
onsignor: I have already one to offer your Eminence, and
vorth twenty men. I am now on my way to Blois, as the
de la Fère lives in the Château de Bragelonne, near that
,

l upon this he took the road to Blois, gossiping with
het, which was a great diversion during their long journey.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO ANGELIC HEADS.

THEY had a long journey before them, but D'Artagnan did not distress himself about it. He knew that his horses had been invigorated at the abundant racks of the Seigneur Bracieux. He therefore started off on the four or five days' journey with full confidence, followed by the faithful Planchet.

As we have before said, these two men, to break the tediousness of the way, journeyed side by side and constantly chatted together. As D'Artagnan had gradually laid aside the master so also had Planchet thrown off the guise of the servant. He was a cunning fellow, and since his sudden elevation to citizenship, he had often regretted the free living of other days, and the conversation and brilliant society of gentlemen; and, conscious of a certain kind of personal quality, grieved to find himself gradually deteriorated by perpetual contact with men of low ideas.

He was therefore soon raised to the rank of a confidant of him whom he still called his master. D'Artagnan had not opened his heart for many years. The consequence was that these two men, on meeting again, suited each other admirably.

Besides, Planchet was no vulgar companion in adventures. He was a man of considerable intelligence; without exactly seeking danger, he did not recoil at its approach, as D'Artagnan had two or three times experienced; and, lastly, he had been a soldier, and arms dignify any one. More than all, if Planchet needed him he needed Planchet quite as much. It was therefore almost on the footing of good friends that they reached the region of Blois.

On the way, D'Artagnan, shaking his head and returning to the idea that constantly beset him, said:

"I know full well that this expedition to Athos is perfectly useless and absurd; but I owe this respect to my old friend—one who had stuff in him for the composition of the most generous and most noble gentleman in the whole world."

"Oh! M. Athos was a high-spirited gentleman," said Planchet.

"Was he not!" ejaculated D'Artagnan.

"Scattering money as the sky scatters hail," continued Plan

:t, "and handling his sword with the air of a king. Do you nember, sir, the duel with the Englishman in the enclosure s Carmes? Ah, how handsome and dignified was M. Athos t day, when he said to his adversary: 'You obliged me to you my name, sir; so much the worse for you, for I shall forced to kill you.' I was near and heard him say it. at is exactly what he said. And the glance, when he kept word and despatched his adversary, who fell without a an! Ah, sir, I repeat that he was a high-spirited gentlen."

Yes," said D'Artagnan, "this is all true as the gospel; but may have lost all these fine qualities by one defect."

I remember," said Planchet, "he loved to drink; or rather drank. But he did not drink like other men. His eyes l nothing when he carried the glass to his lips. Truly, nce was never so eloquent. I fancy that I hear him mur-ring, 'Enter wine, and drive away my cares.' And how he ke the foot of a glass, or a neck of a bottle! No one could it like him."

Well; and now," continued D'Artagnan, "mark the sad ctacle that awaits us. That noble gentleman, with such a ud look, — that handsome cavalier, so brilliant in arms that only wonder was to see him carrying a simple sword and the bâton of a field-marshal, — well, he will be transformed) a crooked old man, with a red nose and bleary eyes. We ll find him stretched on the turf, whence he will regard us h dull eyes, which probably will not be able to recognise us. l is my witness, Planchet," continued D'Artagnan, "that I uld avoid this melancholy spectacle, if I were not determined)ay this respect to the shade of the illustrious Comte de la e, whom we loved so dearly."

'lanchet shook his head without saying a word. It was lent that he shared his master's fears.

And then," continued D'Artagnan, "that decrepitude — Athos is getting old now — and perhaps poverty, for he l have neglected the little property he possessed, and that y Grimaud, more dumb than ever and even more drunken n his master. You see, Planchet, all this breaks my heart."

I fancy that I am there, and that I see him stammering staggering," said Planchet, in a piteous voice.

My only fear, I confess," continued D'Artagnan, "is that a fit of drunken military ardour he may accept my pro-

posals; that would be a great misfortune and a real embarrassment to me and Porthos; but in the midst of his next debauch we will leave him; when he recovers his senses he will understand."

"At any rate, sir," said Planchet, "we shall soon be enlightened on the subject, for I fancy that those lofty walls which are now tinted by the setting sun are the walls of Blois."

"Probably so," said D'Artagnan, "and those sharp and sculptured turrets, of which we just catch a glimpse in the forest to the left, resemble what I have heard of Chambord."

"Shall we enter the town?" inquired Planchet.

"Certainly, to gain some information."

"I advise you, sir, if we enter it, to taste some little pots of cream, of which I have heard a great deal, but which, unfortunately, cannot be carried to Paris, but must be eaten on the spot."

"Well, we will eat some of them, you may depend upon it," said D'Artagnan.

At this moment a heavy ox-waggon such as carry the wood cut in the beautiful forests of the region down to the ports of the Loire came out of a rutty path into the road which the two horsemen were following. A man accompanied it, carrying a long pole armed with a nail, with which he goaded his sluggish team.

"Hé! my friend," cried Planchet to the ox-driver.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" inquired the peasant, in elegant language characteristic of the people of that region, and worthy to shame the purists of the Place de la Sorbonne or the Rue de l'Université.

"We are seeking the house of M. le Comte de la Fère," said D'Artagnan; "do you know that name among the nobles of your neighbourhood?"

The peasant took off his hat on hearing the name, and replied:

"Gentlemen, this wood which I am carrying belongs to him. I have cut it in his forest, and am taking it to the château."

D'Artagnan did not wish to interrogate this man. It was repugnant to his feelings to hear from another what he had himself said to Planchet.

"The *château!*" said he to himself. "The *château!* Ah! I understand. Athos is not very meek; so, like Porthos, he has compelled his peasants to call him monseigneur, and to

term his hovel a château. That dear Athos, especially when he was in his cups, had a heavy hand."

The oxen made slow progress; and as D'Artagnan and Planchet followed the waggon, the pace made them impatient.

"Is this the road?" inquired D'Artagnan, "and may we follow it without danger of mistaking the way?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! certainly, sir," replied the man; "and you can proceed without following these sluggish beasts. You have but half a league to go, and you will perceive a château on your right; you cannot yet see it, on account of a screen of poplars that conceals it. That château is not Bragelonne — it is La Vallière. You must go beyond it; but at the distance of three musket-shots farther on, you will perceive a large white house with a slated roof, built on an eminence and shaded by enormous sycamores; that is the château of M. le Comte de la Fère."

"And is this half a league very long? For there are leagues and leagues in our fine country of France."

"Ten minutes will suffice, sir, for your horse's slender legs."

D'Artagnan thanked the man, and immediately pushed forward. Then in spite of all he could do, agitated by the idea of again seeing the singular man who had so dearly loved him, and who both by his example and precepts had so greatly contributed to his education as a gentleman, he gradually slackened his horse's pace, and went on with his head drooping like a dreamer.

Planchet also had found matter for grave reflection in this meeting and the peasant's manner. Never in Normandy, or in Franche-Comté, or in Artois, or in Picardy, countries which he had inhabited, had he met among the villagers that easy gait, that polished air, that elegant language. He was tempted to believe that he had fallen in with some gentleman frondeur like himself, who, from political motives, had, as he had done, been obliged to assume some disguise.

Soon, at a turn of the road, the Château de la Vallière, as the ox-driver had said, came into the travellers' view; and then, a quarter of a league farther on, the white house, embosomed in sycamores, was seen at the extremity of a thick group of trees which the spring had powdered with flowers as thick as snow-flakes.

On seeing this, D'Artagnan, who was not generally very emotional, felt a *strange* sensation penetrate his heart — so

powerful are the recollections of our youth during the whole course of life. Planchet, who had not the same cause for such feeling, was astonished at seeing his master's agitation, and looked alternately at D'Artagnan and at the house.

The Musketeer went some steps farther, and found himself opposite a grating, wrought with the taste that distinguishes the ironwork of the period. Through this grating a well-tended garden could be seen; also a spacious court, in which many saddle-horses were pawing, held by several servants in different liveries; and there was, likewise, a carriage, drawn by two horses of the country.

"We are either mistaken, or that man has deceived us," said D'Artagnan. "Athos cannot live here. My God! perhaps he is dead, and this property belongs to some one of the same name! Dismount, Planchet, and go and inquire. I confess I have not the courage to do it."

Planchet dismounted.

"You will add," continued D'Artagnan, "that a gentleman passing wishes to have the honour of paying his respects to M. le Comte de la Fère; and should you be satisfied with the information you receive — well, then you may give my name."

Planchet, leading his horse by the bridle, approached the gate and rang the bell; and immediately a servant, with gray hair, but still upright in spite of his age, came forward and received him.

"Does M. le Comte de la Fère live here?" demanded Planchet.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, for Planchet did not wear any livery.

"A nobleman, who has left the service, is he not?"

"Yes, the same."

"And who had a lacquey named Grimaud?" continued Planchet, who, with his habitual prudence, did not think he could fortify himself with too much information.

"M. Grimaud is at present absent from the château," said the servant, beginning to examine Planchet from top to toe like one little accustomed to such interrogations.

"Then," exclaimed Planchet, quite radiant with joy, "I perceive that it is really the same Comte de la Fère whom we are seeking. Will you open the gate? — for I wish to announce to M. le Comte that my master, one of his friends, is here, and wishes to pay his respects to him."

"And why did you not say so before?" said the servant, opening the gate. "But where is your master?"

"Behind me — he is following."

The servant opened the gate, and preceded Planchet, who made a sign to D'Artagnan, who, his heart beating more violently than ever, entered the court on horseback.

When Planchet was on the steps, he heard a voice issuing from one of the lower rooms, and saying:

"Well, where is this gentleman, and why do you not conduct him here?"

This voice, which reached D'Artagnan also, awoke in his heart a thousand emotions, a thousand recollections which he had forgotten. He threw himself hastily from his horse, while Planchet, with a smile on his lips, was going toward the master of the house.

"Why, I know that fellow," said Athos, making his appearance on the threshold.

"Yes, M. le Comte, you know me, and I know you well enough. I am Planchet, M. le Comte, — Planchet, you know"—

And here the honest fellow could not say a word more, so completely had the unexpected appearance of the gentleman astounded him.

"What, Planchet!" exclaimed Athos; "is M. d'Artagnan here, then?"

"I am, my friend; here I am, dear Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, stammering and almost staggering.

At these words a very perceptible emotion passed across the handsome face and calm features of Athos. He took two rapid steps toward D'Artagnan, without taking his eyes off him one instant, and tenderly pressed him in his arms. D'Artagnan, on his part, somewhat recovered from his agitation, embraced him with a cordiality that shone in his tearful eyes.

Athos then took him by the hand, which he pressed between his own, and led him into a salon, where many persons were assembled. Every one arose.

"I present to you," said Athos, "M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, lieutenant of his Majesty's Musketeers, a devoted friend, and one of the bravest and most lovable men I ever knew."

D'Artagnan, according to the custom, received the compliments of the company, to which he responded in the best manner he could; and while the conversation, interrupted for a moment, again became general, he began to study Athos.

Strange! Athos had scarcely aged at all. His beautiful eyes, freed from that circle of dark brown which tells the story of midnight debauches, appeared to be larger and of a purer liquid than ever. His countenance, slightly elongated, had gained in dignity what it had lost in febrile excitement. His hand always wonderfully handsome and nervous in spite of the softness of the skin, shone from under a lace ruffle, like certain hands by Titian and Vandyk. He was rather more slender than formerly; his well-made broad shoulders announced unusual strength; his long, dark hair, slightly sprinkled with gray, fell gracefully on his shoulders, waving naturally; his voice was as fresh and as clear as if he had been only twenty-five; and his splendid teeth, white and perfect, gave an inexpressible charm to his smile.

Meantime his guests, perceiving by the imperceptible dulness of the conversation, that the friends were eager to be alone, began, with old-time skill and politeness, to prepare for their departure — that momentous affair in high life, when there was a high life. But a tremendous noise of dogs barking resounded in the court, and several persons cried out together:

"Ah! Raoul is come back."

Athos, at this word Raoul, looked at D'Artagnan, and seemed to look for the curiosity which this name might well excite. But D'Artagnan as yet comprehended nothing; he had not recovered from his astonishment. He therefore turned almost mechanically, when a handsome youth, about fifteen years old, simply but most tastefully dressed, entered the salon, gracefully raising his hat, adorned with long scarlet plumes.

And yet this person, unexpected as he was, much struck him. A world of new ideas invaded his mind, explaining to him, through every avenue of his fine intellect, the alteration in Athos, which had hitherto appeared quite inexplicable. A singular resemblance between the gentleman and the boy explained the mystery of this reformed life. He waited, observing and listening.

"So you are returned, Raoul," said the Count.

"Yes, sir," replied the young man respectfully, "and I have executed the commision which you gave me."

"But what is the matter with you, Raoul?" said Athos, somewhat anxiously; "you are pale and seem agitated."

"It is because a misfortune has happened to our little neighbour, sir," replied the young man.

"To Mademoiselle de la Vallière?" said Athos, with some ivacity.

"What is it?" asked many of the gentlemen present.

"She was walking with her nurse, Madeline, in the enclosure here the wood-cutters were trimming their trees, when, as I ode past, I saw her, and stopped. When she saw me she umped off a pile of fagots on which she had climbed, her foot urned under her, she fell and was not able to rise again. I ear that she has sprained her ankle."

"Oh, my God! And has Madame de St. Remy, her mother, een informed of it?"

"No, sir, Madame de St. Remy is at Blois, in attendance n Madame the Duchesse d'Orléans. I feared that she might e treated unskilfully, and hastened here to ask your advice."

"Send quickly to Blois; or, rather, do you take your horse, aoul, and go yourself."

Raoul bowed.

"But where is Louise?" inquired the Count.

"I have had her brought here, sir, and have left her with harlot's wife, who, in the meantime, has put her foot into cold ater."

After this explanation, which had given an opportunity for very one to rise, Athos's guests took their leave. The old uc de Barbé alone, in virtue of a twenty years' friendship ith the family of La Vallière, went to see the little Louise, ho was crying, and who, when she saw Raoul, dried her beauful eyes and smiled. Then he proposed to carry the little ouise with him to Blois in his carriage.

"You are right, sir," said Athos; "she will be the sooner with er mother. As for you, Raoul, I am sure that you have acted oughtlessly, and that it was your fault."

"Oh, no, no, sir, I assure you not," cried the young girl; hile the youth grew pale at the thought of his having been ie cause of the accident.

"Oh, sir, I assure you" — murmured Raoul.

"You shall, nevertheless, go to Blois," said the Count kindly and you will make your excuses to Madame de St. Remy and ien return."

The color again appeared on the young man's cheek. After aving consulted the Count's eyes, he took the young girl up in s strong arms, and her pretty face, smiling in the midst of her ain, rested on his shoulder, placed her in the carriage, and

then vaulted on his horse with the grace and agility of an accomplished squire. After having bowed to Athos and D'Artagnan, he went off rapidly, putting himself close to the carriage-door and keeping his eyes constantly fixed on its interior.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHÂTEAU DE BRAGELONNE.

D'ARTAGNAN had remained during all this scene with his eyes wide open and his mouth almost gaping with wonder. He had found everything so completely different from his expectations that he was almost stupid with astonishment.

Athos took his arm and led him into the garden.

"While supper is preparing," said he, smiling, "you will not be sorry, my friend, to clear up a little of this mystery that makes you so thoughtful."

"That is true, Count," replied D'Artagnan, who had already begun to feel the influence of that vast aristocratic superiority which Athos always had over him.

Athos looked at him with his genial smile. "But first, my dear D'Artagnan," said he, "there is no Count here. If I called you Chevalier, it was to introduce you to my guests, and that they might know who you were. But to you, D'Artagnan, I hope that I am always Athos, your comrade and friend. Do you prefer ceremony because you love me less?"

"Oh, God forbid!" said the Gascon, with one of those loyal youthful outbursts which seldom take place in mature age.

"Then let us return to our old habits; and, to begin, let us be frank. Everything astonishes you here, does it not?"

"Profoundly!"

"But what astonishes you most," continued Athos, smiling, "is myself? Confess it."

"I do confess it."

"I am yet young, am I not, in spite of my forty-nine years? I am yet recognisable?"

"On the contrary," said D'Artagnan, who was about to carry Athos's recommendation of frankness farther than he had intended, "you are not so at all."

"Ah! I understand," said Athos, coloring slightly; "*everything has its end,* D'Artagnan, — folly and all."

"And then there has been a change in your fortune, it seems. ou have a capital house; it belongs to you, I presume?"
"Yes; it is the small property, my friend, which, you know, told you I inherited when I left the service."
"You have a park, horses, and equipages?"
Athos smiled.
"The park has twenty acres, my dear friend, including the itchen-garden; my horses amount to two, besides the crop- ıred bobtail for my lacquey; my equipages consist of four :tters, two greyhounds, and a pointer; and all this luxury of pack," added Athos, smiling, "is not for myself."
"Yes, I comprehend," said D'Artagnan; "it is for the young an — for Raoul."
And D'Artagnan looked at Athos with an involuntary smile.
"You have guessed it, my friend," said Athos.
"And this young man is your companion, your godson, rhaps your relation? Ah! how you are changed, my dear thos!"
"This young man," said Athos calmly, — "this young man, Artagnan, is an orphan, whom his mother abandoned at the use of a poor county curé. I have brought him up and ucated him."
"He must be very much attached to you?"
"I believe that he loves me as if I were his father."
"He must be very grateful."
"Oh! as to gratitude, it is reciprocal. I owe him as much he owes me. I do not say so to him, but I tell you so, Artagnan, — the obligation is on my side."
"How can that be?" inquired the astonished Musketeer.
"Oh, my God, yes; he it is who has caused the change you e in me. I was withering like a solitary and blighted tree. othing but a most profound and deep affection could again ite my heart to the affairs of this life. A mistress? — I was o old. Friends? — I possessed you no longer. Well, this y restored to me all that I had lost. I had no longer courage live for myself: I have therefore lived for him. Precepts a great deal for a child, but example does much more. I ve given him an example, D'Artagnan. The vices which I d I corrected; the virtues which I possessed not I have pre- ıded to possess. Therefore, I do not think that I deceive rself when I say that Raoul is destined to become as perfect gentleman as this poor age of ours can produce."

D'Artagnan looked at Athos with increasing admiration They were walking under a green and shady alley, through which some straggling rays of the setting sun found their way One of these golden beams illuminated the countenance o Athos, and his eyes appeared to throw back the warm and gentle evening glow which they received.

The thought of Lady de Winter suddenly crossed D'Artagnan's mind.

"And you are happy?" said he to his friend.

Athos's quick eye penetrated even to the bottom of D'Artagnan's heart, and seemed to read his thought there.

"As happy as it is permitted to any of God's creatures to be here on earth. But finish your thought, D'Artagnan, for you have not told it all to me."

"You are terrible, Athos," said D'Artagnan; "it is impossible to conceal anything from you. Well, then, I wished to ask you whether you have not occasionally sudden emotions of dread like"—

"Like remorse," continued Athos. "I finish your sentence for you, my friend. Yes and no. I feel no remorse, because I believe that that woman deserved her fate. I feel no remorse because, had we allowed her to live, she would have infallibly continued her destructive course. But this does not mean that I am convinced that we had the right to do what we did. Perhaps all blood shed requires expiation. She expiated what she shed: it may be that we have yet to expiate that shed by us.'

"I have sometimes had the same thoughts," said D'Artagnan.

"That woman had a son, had she not?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever heard anything of him?"

"Never."

"He must be twenty-three years old," murmured Athos. "I often think of that young man, D'Artagnan."

"It is singular; and I had entirely forgotten him."

Athos smiled a melancholy smile.

"And have you ever heard anything of Lord de Winter?"

"I know that he was in high favour with King Charles I."

"He must have shared his fortune, which, at present, is very bad. Observe, D'Artagnan, that makes good what I said just now; he allowed Strafford's blood to be shed; blood demands blood. And the Queen?"

"Which Queen?"

"Madame Henriette of England, the daughter of Henry IV."

"She is at the Louvre, you know."

"Yes; where she is in utter destitution, is she not? During the severe cold of last winter, her sick daughter, I have been told, was obliged to remain in bed for want of fire-wood. Do you understand that?" said Athos, shrugging his shoulders; "the daughter of Henry IV. shivering for want of a fagot! Why did she not come to ask hospitality from the first of us she met, instead of from Mazarin? She would then have wanted nothing."

"Why, do you know her, Athos?"

"No; but my mother saw her when she was a child. Did I never tell you that my mother was maid of honour to Marie de' Medicis?"

"Never; you did not talk of such things as those, Athos."

"Oh, yes, I did," replied Athos; "but only on suitable occasions."

"Porthos was not so reserved," said D'Artagnan, with a smile.

"Every one has his own peculiar disposition, my dear D'Artagnan; and Porthos has excellent qualities, in spite of his vanity. Have you seen him lately?"

"I left him five days ago," replied D'Artagnan.

And then, with all the vivacity of his Gascon humour, he described the splendours of Porthos and his Château de Pierrefonds; and while he shot a broadside at his friend he cast several arrows of wit at the worthy Mouston.

"I often wonder," said Athos, smiling at that gayety which recalled the bright days of old, "that we all, by chance, formed a society of men who are yet so completely united after a separation of twenty years. Friendship strikes its roots deep into sincere hearts. Believe me, only worthless men deny its power, because they are incapable of feeling it. And Aramis?"

"I have seen him also; but he appeared cold."

"Ah! you have seen Aramis?" ejaculated Athos, looking at D'Artagnan with his penetrating eyes. "Truly, it is a real pilgrimage to the Shrine of Friendship that you are making, as the poets would say."

"Well, yes," said D'Artagnan, somewhat embarrassed.

"You know," continued Athos, "that Aramis is naturally

cold. Besides, he is always entangled in some intrigue wi women."

"I fancy that he is so at present, and in one of a very co plicated nature," replied D'Artagnan.

Athos made no reply.

"He is not at all curious," said D'Artagnan to himself.

Athos not only made no reply, but he changed the conver tion.

"You see," said he, pointing out the house, to which th had almost returned, "in about an hour's walk we have ma the tour of all my domain."

"Everything is so charming, and, above all, smacks of t gentleman," replied D'Artagnan.

At this moment the sound of a horse's feet was heard.

"It is Raoul returning," said Athos; "we shall hear so news of the poor little girl."

In fact, the young man appeared at the barred gate, a covered with dust entered the courtyard. Then, jumpi from his horse, he gave the bridle to a sort of groom, a came forward to salute the Count and D'Artagnan.

"This gentleman," said Athos, laying his hand on D'Ar gnan's shoulder, — "this gentleman is the Chevalier d'Ar gnan, of whom you have so often heard me speak, Raoul."

"Sir," said the young man, bowing again and more p foundly, "the Count has mentioned your name whenever wished to cite the example of an intrepid and noble gent man."

This little compliment did not fail to touch D'Artagna He stretched forth his hand to Raoul, saying —

"My young friend, all the praises bestowed on me ought revert to the Count, who trained me in all things, and it is n his fault if his pupil has not profited by his instructions. B he will succeed with you, I am sure, Raoul. I like yo manner, and your politeness has given me great pleasure.

Athos was more delighted than he could express. He look gratefully at D'Artagnan, and then gave Raoul one of the rare smiles that children are so proud of receiving.

"Now," thought D'Artagnan, whom this mute expression countenance had not escaped, "I am quite certain of it."

"Well," said Athos, "I hope that the accident has had serious consequences?"

"They cannot yet tell, sir. The doctor can form no decisi

as yet, on account of the swelling; he fears, however, that a tendon may be injured."

"And why did not you remain longer with Madame de St. Remy?"

"I feared that I should not be back in time for your dinner, sir," said Raoul, "and that I might keep you waiting."

At this moment a little boy, half peasant, half lacquey, came to announce supper.

Athos conducted his guest into a dining-room, very plainly and simply furnished; but the windows looked on one side toward the garden, on the other, on a conservatory filled with magnificent flowers.

D'Artagnan looked at the service. The plate was splendid; it was evidently the ancient family plate. On a sideboard was a superb silver ewer, which D'Artagnan stopped to examine.

"Ah! this is divinely executed," said he.

"Yes," replied Athos, "it is one of the masterpieces of that great Florentine artist, Benvenuto Cellini."

"And what battle does it represent?"

"Marignan. It is at the moment when one of my ancestors gave his sword to Francis I., who had just broken his own. It was on this occasion that Enguerrand de la Fère, my grandfather, was made a knight of St. Michael. Besides that, the King, fifteen years later, — for he had not forgotten that he had fought three hours longer with his friend Enguerrand's sword without its breaking, — made him a present of this ewer, and of a sword which probably you saw formerly in my room, and which is also a very handsome piece of workmanship. Those were the days of the giants," said Athos. "We are but pigmies by the side of such men. But let us sit down and sup, D'Artagnan. By the by," said Athos to the little servant, who had just served the soup, "call Charlot."

The boy left the room, and a moment after the servant who had come to the gate on their arrival entered.

"My dear Charlot," said Athos, "I particularly recommend to your care, during his continuance here, Planchet, M. d'Artagnan's lacquey. He likes good wine, and you have the keys of the cellar. He has often lain hard and cannot have any objection to a good bed; so look to that also, I beseech you."

Charlot bowed and left the room.

"Charlot is also a fine fellow," said Athos; "he has lived with me eighteen years."

"You think of everything," said D'Artagnan; "and I thank you for Planchet, my dear Athos."

The youth opened his eyes with astonishment at this name, and seemed to doubt whether D'Artagnan really addressed the Count.

"That name appeared strange to you, did it not, Raoul?" said Athos, smiling. "It was my military appellation when M. d'Artagnan, two worthy friends, and myself performed our exploits at La Rochelle, under the late Cardinal, and M. de Bassompierre, who is since dead. This gentleman deigns to retain for me this friendly appellation, and every time I hear it my heart warms with emotion."

"That name was once very celebrated," said D'Artagnan, "and one day received the honours of a triumph."

"What do you mean, sir?" demaned Raoul, with youthful curiosity.

"Faith! I know nothing about it," said Athos.

"Have you forgotten the bastion of St. Gervais, Athos, and the napkin which was turned into a flag by three musket-balls? I have a better memory than you have, and will tell you all about it, young man."

And he recounted to Raoul all the history of the bastion, as Athos had related it to him.

At this recital the youth fancied he saw before him one of those feats of arms depicted by Tasso or Arisoto, and belonging to the romantic ages of chivalry.

"But what D'Artagnan does not tell you," said Athos, "is that he was one of the best swordsmen of his time. Hand of iron, wrist of steel, aim certain, and eye of fire — that is what his adversary had to contend with. He was eighteen — three years older than you, Raoul — when I first saw him in action and against tried men."

"And was M. d'Artagnan victorious?" inquired the young man, whose eyes shone bright during this conversation, and appeared to ask for some particulars.

"I killed one, I believe," replied D'Artagnan, stopping Athos by a glance. "As for the other, I either disarmed him or wounded him, I forget which."

"Oh! you wounded him — you were a rough opponent," said Athos.

"And I have not lost a great deal of my skill," replied D'Artagnan, with his little Gascon laugh of self-satisfaction; "*and a little* while ago"—

A look from Athos stopped his mouth.

"I wish you to learn, Raoul," said Athos, "you who fancy yourself so skilful, and whose vanity might some day receive a severe lesson, — I wish you to learn how dangerous the man is who unites coolness to activity; for I could never give you a more striking example. Request M. d'Artagnan to give us a lesson to-morrow, if he be not too much fatigued."

"Hang it, my dear Athos, you are yourself an excellent master, more particularly as to those qualifications which you extol in me. This very day Planchet was speaking to me of that famous duel, with Lord de Winter and his companions, in the enclosure of Des Carmes. Ah! young man," continued D'Artagnan, "there is here one whom I often called the best swordman in the world."

"Oh, I must have spoiled my hand with this boy," said Athos.

"There are some hands which never spoil, my dear Athos, but which spoil others."

The young man would willingly have prolonged this conversation the whole night; but Athos observed that their guest must be fatigued and in need of repose. D'Artagnan politely expostulated; but Athos insisted upon his taking possession of his room. Raoul conducted him to it; and as Athos fancied that he would remain there as long as he could, to make him tell him all the exploits of their youth, he himself went for him a short time after, and finished this delightful evening by a friendly squeeze of the hand and a good-night to the Musketeer.

CHAPTER XVII.

ATHOS'S DIPLOMACY.

D'Artagnan went to bed, not so much for the sake of sleeping as to be alone, and to think on all that he had seen and heard that evening.

As he had an excellent disposition, and had from the first experienced for Athos a kind of instinctive inclination which had grown into a sincere friendship, he was delighted to find a man alive, with intellect and vigor, instead of the brutalised drunkard whom he had expected to see dozing himself sober

on a dunghill. He also submitted, without much resistance, to a resumption of that superiority which Athos had always had over him; and instead of feeling any of that jealousy and disappointment which would have affected a less generous nature, he felt a sincere and loyal joy, giving him hopes of a favourable result from his negotiation.

Yet it seemed to him that Athos was not quite frank and open on all points. Who was this young man, whom he said he had adopted, and who so much resembled him? What meant that return to the ways of the world, that overstrained sobriety, which he had observed at table? One circumstance insignificant in itself, namely, the absence of Grimaud, — from whom Athos could not be separated in former times, and whose name had not even been mentioned, in spite of various hints, — much disquieted D'Artagnan. He no longer, then, possessed his friend's entire confidence; or Athos was connected to some in visible chain, or had been beforewarned of the visit he paid him.

He could not help thinking of Rochefort, and of what he said in the Church of Notre Dame. Had Rochefort been here before him?

D'Artagnan had no time to lose in long reflections. Therefore he determined to come to an explanation the next day. The smallness of Athos's fortune, so skilfully concealed, evinced his anxiety for appearances, and betrayed a remnant of ambition which might be easily rekindled. Athos's vigor of intellect and clearness of ideas made him a man more easy to be roused than most others; and he would enter into the plans of the minister with the greater ardour, from his natural activity being doubled by the spur of necessity.

These thoughts kept D'Artagnan awake, in spite of his fatigue. He arranged his plans of attack; and although he knew that Athos was a formidable opponent, he determined to commence action after breakfast the next morning.

"And yet," he said to himself, "it is necessary to proceed with great caution, and it may be better to examine for some days Athos's connections, to gain some information as to his new habits of life, to endeavour to draw from the artless youth either while fencing or hunting with him, some intermediate intelligence, so as to connect the Athos of former times with the Athos of the present; and this will probably be easy, for the scholar must have imbibed something of the character of *his preceptor.*"

But D'Artagnan, who was a most acute Gascon, saw at once what advantages he would give against himself, were he, by any indiscretion or want of skill, to expose his manœuvres to Athos's practised eye.

And then it must be confessed — however willing he was to use stratagem against the cunning of Aramis and the vanity of Porthos — D'Artagnan was ashamed to shuffle with Athos, the frank and honourable gentleman. It seemed to him that in acknowledging him their superior in finesse, Porthos and Aramis would think more highly of him; but that Athos, on the contrary, would esteem him less.

"Ah! why is not Grimaud, the silent Grimaud, here?" said D'Artagnan; "there are many things which I should have understood in his silence. Grimaud had such an eloquent silence."

Meantime, all noises had ceased in the house. D'Artagnan had heard the doors and shutters closed. Then the dogs outside, after having answered one another for a while, in turn were quiet. Finally a nightingale, hidden in a thick mass of shrubbery, poured out its melodious notes in the midst of the night, and went to sleep. There was no other noise in the château than the measured and monotonous tread of some one walking underneath his chamber. He imagined that it was Athos's room.

"He is walking and meditating," thought D'Artagnan; "but on what? It is impossible to tell. One might guess everything else — but not that."

At last Athos, no doubt, went to bed, for this noise also ceased. The silence and fatigue overcame D'Artagnan; he closed his eyes and almost immediately fell asleep.

D'Artagnan was no sluggard. Scarcely had the first dawn of day gilded his shutters, before he leaped from his bed and opened his windows. He thought he saw through the blinds some one in the court who appeared to wish to avoid being seen or heard. According to his usual custom of observing everything that took place around him, D'Artagnan watched, without making the slightest noise, and recognised Raoul's garnet-colored coat and brown hair.

The young man — for he it was — opened the stable door and led forth the same bay horse which he rode the evening before, saddled and bridled it himself as quickly and skilfully as a professed groom, then led the animal down the right path

n garden, opened a small side door, led his horse the door after him; and then, over the top of the nan perceived him pass like an arrow under the ...nging branches of the maples and acacias. D'Artagnan had remarked the evening before that the road led to Blois.

"Aha!" said the Gascon, "there is a young rogue who is already playing his pranks, and who does not appear to share Athos's hatred of the fair sex. He is not gone out hunting, for he has neither dogs nor arms; he is not gone on a commission, for he seeks concealment. From whom does he conceal himself? From me or his father? — for I am quite certain that the Count is his father. As for that, however, I will know it; for I will ask Athos plainly whether it is so."

The daylight increased. All those noises which D'Artagnan heard cease successively the night before he now heard successively renewed — the bird in the branches, the dog in the stable, the sheep in the pastures; the boats moored on the Loire seemed to revive, detaching themselves from the banks, and letting themselves float down on the current. Thus D'Artagnan remained at his window, that he might not waken any one. Then, when he heard the doors and shutters open, he gave a last turn to his hair and a last curl to his mustache, brushed, from habit, the rim of his hat with the sleeve of his doublet, and went downstairs. He had hardly left the house before he perceived Athos, stooping down to the earth in the attitude of a man who is looking for a coin in the sand.

"Good morning, my dear host," cried D'Artagnan.

"Good morning, dear friend. Have you passed a good night?"

"Excellent, Athos, — like your bed, like your supper, which was conducive to pleasant sleep, and like your reception of me. But what were you looking for so earnestly? Are you perchance become an admirer of tulips?"

"My dear friend, you need not make sport of me if I were. In the country tastes greatly change; and unwittingly one learns to love all those beautiful things which the smile of God causes to spring from the earth, and which are looked upon with contempt in towns. In simple truth, I was looking at the irises which I had placed near this reservoir, and which have been crushed this morning. These gardeners are the most awkward creatures in the world. In leading a horse to water they must have let him tread upon the flower-bed."

D'Artagnan began to smile.

"Ah," said he, "do you think so?" And he led his friend along the path, where a great number of similar steps were perceptible. "Here are some more, Athos," said he, in a careless manner.

"Yes, so there are, and quite fresh! Who can have gone out here this morning?" queried Athos, with some anxiety. "Can a horse have got out of the stable?"

"It is not probable," said D'Artagnan, "for the prints are equal and regular."

"Where is Raoul?" cried Athos, "and why have I not seen him this morning?"

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan, putting his finger on his lips, with a smile.

"What do you mean?" inquired Athos.

D'Artagnan related what he had seen, at the same time scrutinizing his host's countenance.

"Ah! I understand all now," said Athos, slightly shrugging his shoulders. "The poor boy is gone to Blois."

"Why?"

"To learn about the little La Vallière — the girl, you know, who hurt her foot yesterday."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan, as if incredulous.

"Not only do I think so, but I am quite certain," replied Athos. "Did you not observe that Raoul was in love?"

"And with whom? — with that child of seven?"

"My dear fellow, at Raoul's age the heart is so full that it must be bestowed on something, whether dream or reality. Well, his love is half one, half the other!"

"You are jesting. What! that little girl?"

"But did you not observe that she is the prettiest little creature in the world, with her golden hair, and her blue eyes already both rebellious and languishing?"

"But what say you to this passion?"

"I say nothing. I laugh and make sport of Raoul. But these first cravings of the heart are so imperious, these first expansions of the feelings are at the same time so sweet and so bitter, that they often appear to have the character of a real passion. As for me, I remember that, at Raoul's age, I fell in love with a Greek statue which good King Henry IV. gave to my father; and I thought I should have gone mad when I was told that the history of Pygmalion was only a fable."

"It comes from sheer idleness. You do not occupy Ra sufficiently; and he seeks to dissipate his mind."

"That is exactly the case; therefore I am thinking of moving him from this place."

"And you will do well."

"I know that; but it will almost break his heart, and will suffer as much as from a real passion. For three or f years, even when he was himself quite a child, he has b amusing himself with embellishing and admiring this li idol, which he would come to adore should he remain h These children dream all day together, and talk of a thous serious things, as if they were lovers twenty years old. short, these things have for some time amused the little Vallière's parents; but I fancy that they now begin to fr at it."

"Utter childishness! But Raoul requires something to tract his attention. Remove him from this place, or you never make a man of him."

"I think," said Athos, "that I shall send him to Paris."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, and he thought that the mon for opening hostilities had come.

"If you wish," said he, "we can make a career for young man."

"Ah!" said Athos, in his turn.

"In fact, I wish to consult you on something which suggested itself to my mind."

"Do so."

"Do you not think that the time is come to take service

"But are you not in the service, D'Artagnan?"

"I mean active service. Has the life of old times notl which tempts you; and if any real advantage awaited would you not be willing to resume, in my company in that of our mutual friend Porthos, the exploits of youth?"

"So you are making me a real proposition, are you, D'A gnan?" said Athos.

"A plain and simple one."

"To reënter the service?"

"Yes."

"On whose side, and against whom?" inquired Athos, denly fixing his clear, kindly eye on the Gascon.

"Oh, the devil, you are so exacting!"

"And, above all, particular. Mark me well, D'Artagnan: there is only one person, or rather one cause, to which a man like myself can be useful — the King's."

"Precisely so," said the Musketeer.

"Yes, but let us thoroughly understand each other," replied Athos, very seriously. "If by the King's cause you mean M. de Mazarin's, we are at cross-purposes."

"I do not exactly say that," rejoined D'Artagnan, with embarrassment.

"Come, D'Artagnan," said Athos, "there must be no finessing between us. Your hesitation, your turning and twisting, tell me plainly from whom you come. In fact, such a cause dare not be openly avowed; and any one who recruits for it must do it with head depressed and faltering voice."

"Oh, my dear Athos!" cried D'Artagnan.

"You know," continued Athos, "that I do not refer to you, who are the pearl of brave and honourable men. I speak to you of that sordid and intriguing Italian — of that vulgar creature who is trying to place on his own head a crown which he has stolen from under a pillow — of that cur who calls his own party the King's, and who is planning to imprison the princes of the blood, since he dares not kill them, as our Cardinal, the great Cardinal, did; of a skinflint, who weights his golden crowns and keeps the parings, fearing, although he cheats, that he may lose them at the next day's play; a rascal, who, they say, ill-treats the Queen — so much the worse for her; and who, in three months, will bring upon us a civil war, that he may himself keep possession of the pensions. Is that the master that you propose for me, D'Artagnan? Many thanks to you!"

"You are more animated than formerly, God forgive me!" said D'Artagnan; "and years, instead of cooling, have heated your blood. Who has told you that this was my master, or that I wished to impose him on you?"

"The devil!" added the Gascon to himself; "we must not impart our secrets to a man so ill-disposed."

"But, my dear friend," said Athos, "what are your propositions, after all?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! nothing can be more simple. You live on your estate, and appear to be satisfied with your golden mediocrity. Porthos has perhaps fifty or sixty thousand livres of rent. Aramis has always fifteen duchesses, who dispute for

the abbé as they did for the Musketeer; he is a spoiled of Fortune. But what am I doing in this world? I have my cuirass and buff coat for twenty years, chained down t low and unsatisfactory rank, nor advancing, nor retrogr nor even living. I may be said to be dead. Well, when is a chance of my reviving in some measure, you all say t 'A sordid fellow! a rascal! a cur! a bad master!' Ah, pa I am of your opinion; but find me a better, or show me means of procuring a larger income."

Athos reflected for three seconds, and in those three se he understood the game of D'Artagnan, who, finding that h advanced too far, was now retreating to conceal his play. saw clearly that the propositions D'Artagnan had made genuine, and would have been fully developed had he l willing ear to them. "Good!" said he to himself; "D gnan belongs to Mazarin." And from this moment Athc extremely guarded.

On his side D'Artagnan played a closer game than eve

"But, after all," continued Athos, "you have some have you not?"

"Yes, certainly; I wished to consult you all, and to some means of doing something; for, if disunited, we never be efficient."

"There I agree with you. You mentioned Porthos. you persuaded him to try his fortune? I thought that h acquired it already."

"Yes, he has; but man is so constituted that he always something."

"And what does Porthos want?"

"To be a baron."

"Ah, it is true — I forgot," said Athos, laughing.

"It is true," thought D'Artagnan; "and how did he that? Does he correspond with Aramis? If I knev I should know everything."

Here the conversation terminated, for at that moment entered. Athos wished to scold him gently; but the youn was so distressed that he had not the courage to do it instead of it inquired what was the matter.

"Is your little neighbour worse?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Ah, sir," replied Raoul, almost choked with grief, "h is very serious; and the surgeon fears that without any ent deformity she may be lame for life."

"That would be very dreadful," said Athos.

D'Artagnan had a joke at the end of his lips, but perceiving how Athos was affected by this misfortune he controlled himself.

"Ah, sir, what more than drives me to despair," said Raoul, "is that the misfortune was caused by me."

"How so, Raoul?" inquired Athos.

"Because she jumped from the fagot in order to come to me."

"Only one resource remains, my dear Raoul," said D'Artagnan, "and that is to marry her by way of expiation."

"Ah, sir," said Raoul, "you laugh at real sorrow; that is not right."

And Raoul, who wanted to be alone to weep uninterruptedly, went to his room, from which he did not return till breakfast-time.

The harmony of the two friends had not been in the least altered by the morning's skirmish. They therefore breakfasted with the best of appetites, from time to time looking at poor Raoul, who, with tearful eyes and full heart, ate scarcely anything.

When breakfast was finished, two letters were brought in, which Athos read with great attention, without being able to avoid starting two or three times.

D'Artagnan, who with his keen eyes was watching him from the other end of the table, could have sworn that he recognised the handwriting of Aramis. The other was in a woman's hand, long and confused.

D'Artagnan, seeing that Athos wished to be alone either to reply to the letters or think them over, said, "Come, Raoul, let us take a turn in the fencing-room; it will amuse you."

The young man looked at Athos, who gave a nod of assent.

They entered a low room, where they found foils, masques, gloves, breastplates, and all the accessories for fencing.

"Well?" said Athos, coming in a quarter of an hour afterwards.

"He already has your hand, my dear Athos," said D'Artagnan; "and had he acquired your coolness I should have nothing but compliments to make him" —

The youth himself was rather out of countenance; for one or two hits which he had made on D'Artagnan's arm or thigh, he had been buttoned twenty times full on the body.

At this moment Charlot entered with a letter of great consequence for D'Artagnan, which a messenger had just brought.

It was now Athos's turn to look out of the corner of his eye.

D'Artagnan perused the letter without betraying the slightest emotion; and after having read it, slightly shaking his head —

"There, my dear friend," said he, "see what it is to be in the service. Faith, you have good reason not to wish to resume it! M. de Tréville is ill, and the company cannot do without me, so that my leave of absence is expired."

"Do you return to Paris?" said Athos quickly.

"Yes, certainly," replied D'Artagnan; "are you not coming too?"

Athos coloured slightly and said, "If I should go, I should be very happy to see you there."

"Hallo, Planchet," cried D'Artagnan from the door, "we shall be off in ten minutes. Give the horses some oats." Then turning to Athos: "Methinks I miss something here, and I am very sorry to leave you without seeing our worthy Grimaud."

"Grimaud!" said Athos. "Ah, that is true; I was surprised you did not ask after him before. I have lent him to one of my friends" —

"Who will understand his signs?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I hope so," replied Athos.

The two friends embraced with great affection. D'Artagnan pressed Raoul's hand, made Athos promise that he would visit him if he went to Paris and write if he did not go, and then mounted his horse. Planchet, always in time, was already mounted.

"Are you not coming with me?" said D'Artagnan to Raoul, with a smile; "I pass through Blois."

Raoul turned towards Athos, who kept him back by an imperceptible sign.

"No, sir," replied the youth; "I remain with the Count."

"In that case, farewell to both of you, my good friends," said D'Artagnan, giving their hands a last squeeze, "and God preserve you! as we said whenever we parted, in the time of the late Cardinal."

Athos made a sign with his hand, Raoul bowed, and D'Artagnan and Planchet departed.

The Count followed them with his eyes, his hand resting on the shoulder of the youth, who almost equalled him in height. *But as soon* as they had disappeared behind the wall —

"Raoul," said the Count, "we start for Paris this evening."

"What?" said the youth, growing pale.

"You may go and offer my adieus and your own to Madame St. Remy. I shall expect you here at seven o'clock."

The young man bowed with a mingled expression of sorrow and gratitude, and left the house to saddle his horse.

Scarcely was D'Artagnan out of sight before he drew his letter from his pocket and read it again:

"*Return immediately to Paris.*

"*J. M.*"

"The letter is dry enough, certainly," murmured D'Artagnan; "and if there was not a postscript, perhaps I should not have understood it; but fortunately there is one."

And he read this famous postscript, which made him excuse the dryness of the letter:

"*P.S. — Go to the royal treasurer at Blois. Give your name and show him this letter, and you will receive two hundred pistoles.*"

"Decidedly," said D'Artagnan. "I admire this style of prose. The Cardinal writes better than I thought. Come, Planchet, let us pay a visit to the King's treasurer, and then push forward."

"Toward Paris, sir?"

"Yes, toward Paris."

And they set off at full speed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

M. DE BEAUFORT.

LISTEN now to what had happened and why D'Artagnan's return to Paris was necessary.

One evening when Mazarin was going to pay the Queen his customary visit at the time when every one had retired to rest, on passing a door of the guard-room that opened into the antechamber he heard some loud talking; and wishing to know what the soldiers were saying, he went on tiptoe up to the door, which was ajar, and putting his head close to it listened attentively.

There was a dispute among the guards.

"And I will answer for it," said one of them, "that if Coysel has foretold this, the thing is as certain as if it had already taken place. I do not know him myself; but I have heard say that he is not only an astrologer, but a magician."

"Hang it! my dear, if he is one of your friends, take care you are doing him a great injury."

"How so?"

"Because he may be indicted for it."

"Ah, ha! they do not burn sorcerers nowadays."

"No! And yet I fancy it is not long since the late Cardinal burnt Urbain Grandier. I know one thing, that I was one of the guards at his stake, and saw him roasted."

"My dear, Urbain Grandier was not a sorcerer, but a learned man, which is quite another thing. Urbain Grandier did not predict the future, but knew the past, which is often much worse."

Mazarin nodded his head in token of assent; but wishing to learn the prediction they were discussing, he remained in his place.

"I do not say," continued the guard, "that Coysel is not a sorcerer; but what I say is, that if he publishes his prediction it is a sure means of preventing its accomplishment."

"Why?"

"The thing is clear. If you and I fight, for instance, and I tell you, 'Now I shall give you a direct thrust, or a back-handed one,' of course you will parry them naturally enough. Well, then, if Coysel says openly, so that the Cardinal may hear it, 'Before such a day such and such a prisoner will escape,' it is plain enough that the Cardinal will take his precautions so effectually that the prisoner will not escape."

"Ah, my God!" said another, who appeared to have been sleeping on a bench, but who, in spite of his apparent sleep, had not lost one word of the conversation, — 'and do you think that men can avoid their fate? If it is written on high that the Duc de Beaufort must escape, the Duc de Beaufort will escape, and all the Cardinal's precautions will be unavailing."

Mazarin started. He was an Italian — consequently superstitious.

He walked hastily into the midst of the guards, who, on seeing him, broke off their conversation.

"What were you saying, gentlemen?" inquired he, in his insinuating tone, —'that M. de Beaufort had escaped, I believe.'

"No, monsignor," answered the incredulous soldier. "At present he is in safe custody. We were saying that he would escape."

"And who says so?"

"Come, repeat your tale, St. Laurent," said the guard, turning toward the narrator.

"Monsignor," said the guard, "I was simply stating to these gentlemen that I had heard of a prediction of a certain Coysel, who pretends that however strictly M. de Beaufort may be guarded, he will escape before Whitsuntide."

"And this Coysel is a dreamer — a madman?" said the Cardinal, still smiling.

"No," said the guard, resolute in his credulity; "he has foretold many things which have happened: as, for example, that the Queen would have a son; that M. de Coligny would be killed in a duel by the Duc de Guise; and, lastly, that the coadjutor would be a cardinal. Well, the Queen has not only had one son, but another two years later; and M. de Coligny was killed."

"Yes," said Mazarin, "but the coadjutor is not yet a cardinal."

"No, monsignor," said the guard, "but he will be one."

Mazarin made a grimace, as much as to say, "He has not the biretta yet." Then he added: "So your opinion is, my friend, that M. de Beaufort will escape?"

"It is so much my decided opinion, monsignor," replied the soldier, "that if your Eminence were this very moment to offer me M. de Chavigny's situation of governor of the Château of Vincennes, I would not accept it. Oh! the day after Whitsuntide, it would be quite another thing."

Nothing is more convincing than complete conviction; it influences even the incredulous; and far from being incredulous, Mazarin was superstitious, as we have said. He therefore retired, quite pensive.

"The stingy dog!" said the guard who was leaning against the wall. "He pretends not to believe your magician, St. Laurent, that he may not have to give you anything; but he will no sooner have reached his own room than he will take advantage of your prediction."

In fact, instead of continuing his way toward the Queen's room, Mazarin returned to his cabinet, and calling Bernouin, he ordered him, at break of day, to send for the life-guardsman whom he had placed over M. de Beaufort; he also wished to be awakened on his arrival.

Without suspecting it, the guard had touched Mazarin's te derest point. M. de Beaufort had been five years in prison, a there was not a day that Mazarin did not think that he wou escape at some time or other. It was impossible to keep t grandson of Henry IV. in prison during his whole life, esp cially when this grandson of Henry IV. was scarcely thirty yea old. But however he might escape, what an accumulation hatred must he have heaped up, during his captivity, again the author of it! — who had taken him — rich, brave, and illu trious, beloved by the women, feared by the men — to cut the brightest years of his life; for a man in prison scarce lives. In the meantime Mazarin redoubled his vigilance arou M. de Beaufort. Only he was like the miser in the fable, w could not sleep near his treasure. Often, in the night, he awo with a start, dreaming that they had stolen M. de Beauf from him. Then he sent to inquire about him; and at eve report he had the sorrow to hear that the prisoner play drank, sang, in marvellous spirits; but that, while playin drinking, and singing, he often left off to swear that Mazar should pay dearly for all the pleasure that he compelled hi to enjoy at Vincennes.

This idea had filled the Cardinal's mind during his sle Therefore, when Bernouin entered his chamber at seven in t morning to awake him, his first inquiry was:

"What is the matter? Has M. de Beaufort escaped fr Vincennes?"

"I do not think he has, monsignor," replied Bernouin, who official calmness was never ruffled; "but at all events you w soon hear something about him, for La Ramée, the life-guard man for whom they sent this morning to Vincennes, is waitin your Eminence's commands."

"Show him up," said Mazarin, arranging his pillows so th he might receive him sitting up in bed.

The officer entered. He was a tall, fat, chubby-cheeke good-looking man, and had such an air of tranquillity th Mazarin was quite frightened.

"That rascal looks like a fool," murmured he.

The officer remained standing silent at the door.

"Come in, sir," said Mazarin.

The officer obeyed.

"Do you know what is said here?" inquired the Cardinal.

"No, your Eminence."

"Why, they say that M. de Beaufort is going to escape from Vincennes, if he has not done it already."

The officer's face expressed the most profound astonishment. He opened his little eyes and his large mouth at the same time, so that he might the more easily absorb the pleasantry which his Eminence did him the honour to indulge in. Then, being no longer able to maintain his gravity at such a supposition, he burst out into such a paroxysm of laughter that his fat limbs were shaken as if by a violent access of fever.

Mazarin was quite delighted at this ebullition, although it was not very respectful; but nevertheless he remained impenetrably grave himself.

When La Ramée had laughed heartily and wiped his eyes, he began to think that it was time for him to speak, and to make some apology for his breach of decorum.

"Escape, monsignor?" said he, "escape? Why, your Eminence cannot know where M. de Beaufort is."

"Yes, sir; I know that M. de Beaufort is in the prison of Vincennes."

"Yes, your Excellence, in a room the walls of which are seven feet thick, with iron-grated windows, the cross-bars of which are as thick as my arm."

"Sir," said Mazarin, "with patience any wall may be broken through; and a bar may be sawn asunder by a watch-spring."

"But your Excellence does not know that there are eight guards near him, — four in his antechamber and four in his room, — and that these guards never leave him."

"But he leaves his chamber — he plays at mall and at tennis."

"Monsignor, these amusements are permitted among the prisoners; yet if your Eminence wishes it, they can be stopped."

"No, no," said Mazarin, who feared that if he retrenched his pleasures the prisoner, should he ever escape, would be still more exasperated against him; "I only want to know who plays with him."

"Monsignor, he plays with the officer on guard, or with myself, or with the other prisoners."

"But does he not go near the walls when he plays?"

"Does not your Eminence know these walls? They are sixty feet high; and I doubt whether M. de Beaufort be sufficiently tired of life to run the hazard of breaking his neck by jumping from the top to the bottom."

"Hum!" said the Cardinal, who began to regain his co dence. "You say, then, my dear M. la Ramée"—

"That unless M. de Beaufort should find some means changing himself into a little bird, I will answer for hin

"Take care! You are very confident," replied Mazar "M. de Beaufort told the guards who were conducting h to Vincennes that he had often thought of the chance of bei imprisoned, and that, in that case, he had found out fo methods of escape."

"Monsignor, if, among these forty methods, there had b one practicable," replied La Ramée, "depend upon it he wo have been long since out of prison."

"Come, come—not such a fool as I thought," murmu Mazarin.

"Besides, monsignor forgets that M. de Chavigny is g ernor of Vincennes," continued La Ramée, "and that M. Chavigny is no friend of M. de Beaufort."

"Yes; but M. de Chavigny is sometimes absent."

"When he is absent I am there."

"But when you are absent yourself?"

"Oh, when I am absent I have in my place a fellow w aspires to become one of his Majesty's officers, and who promise you, keeps a good lookout. In the three weeks sin I have taken him into my service I have only one compla to make against him, and that is, that he is too harsh to t prisoner."

"And who is this Cerberus?" inquired the Cardinal.

"A certain M. Grimaud, your Excellence."

"And what was he before he came to you at Vincennes?"

"Well, he lived in the provinces, as the person who reco mended him informed me. He got into some scrape, owing his obstinacy, and would not, I fancy, be sorry to secure imp nity under the King's uniform."

"And who recommended this man to you?"

"The Duke de Grammont's steward."

"Then you think he may be trusted?"

"As completely as myself, monsignor."

"He is no babbler, is he?"

"Great heavens, monsignor, I thought for a long time he w dumb! He speaks and answers only by signs. It appears th his old master trained him to it."

"Well then, tell him, my dear M. la Ramée, that if he i

good and faithful keeper I will shut my eyes upon his provincial pranks; that he shall wear a uniform which shall ensure him respect; and that in the pocket of that uniform some pistoles shall be found to drink the King's health."

Mazarin was very liberal of his promises. It was quite the contrary with the worthy M. Grimaud, whose merits La Ramée lauded so highly; for he spoke but little and did a great deal.

The Cardinal questioned La Ramée a good deal more concerning the prisoner, and about the way in which he was fed and lodged; to all which he answered so satisfactorily that he dismissed him, almost entirely reassured.

As it was now nine o'clock, he arose, dressed, and perfumed himself, and then visited the Queen to inform her why he had not come the evening before. The Queen who did not fear M. de Beaufort much less than the Cardinal did, and who was almost equally superstitious, made him repeat, word for word, all La Ramée's promises, and all the eulogiums he had bestowed on his assistant. When he had finished —

"Alas, sir," said she, in a low voice, "why have we not a Grimaud near each prince?"

"Patience!" said Mazarin, with his Italian smile; "perhaps we shall come to that in due time. But in the meanwhile"—

"Well, in the meanwhile?"

"I will take my precautions."

And accordingly he wrote to D'Artagnan to return.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW M. DE BEAUFORT AMUSED HIMSELF IN THE PRISON AT VINCENNES.

The prisoner who caused M. Mazarin so much fear, and whose methods of escape disturbed the peace of the whole Court, had no suspicion of the terror he inspired at the Palais Royal.

He found himself so excellently guarded that he recognised the utter futility of any attempt. All his revenge consisted in uttering a number of imprecations and abusive epithets against Mazarin. He had even endeavoured to compose some lampoons, but had quickly abandoned the idea. In fact, M. de Beaufort not only had not *received from* Heaven the power of making

verses, but often found the greatest difficulty in expressin self in prose. So Blot, the song-writer of the period, s him:

"*In Combat, Beaufort lightens, thunders;*
To fear him then is of some use.
But in an argument he blunders,
And you would take him for a goose.

"*When Gaston speaks, it is admitted*
You will not find him so untoward!
Why is not Beaufort ready-witted?
Why cannot Gaston wield the sword?"[1]

It is, therefore, easy to understand why the prisoner ha fined himself to insults and imprecations.

The Duc de Beaufort was the grandson of Henry I Gabrielle d'Estrées; as brave, as good, as proud, and, abo as much of a Gascon as his grandfather; he was mu learned. After having been for some time after the de Louis XIII. in great favour and confidence, — in sho first at Court, — one day he was obliged to give way to M and to take the second place; and the next day, as he h folly to be angry at this transposition, and the imprudence so, the Queen had him arrested and carried to Vincennes same Guitaut whom we mentioned in the first part of th tory, and whom we shall have occasion to bring forward It must be understood that when we say the Queen we Mazarin. Not only did they thus relieve themselves presence and pretensions, but they had no longer rec him as in the game, popular as he was; and for five he had been occupying a most unroyal chamber in the of Vincennes.

This space of time — which would have matured the of any other person than M. de Beaufort — had passec his head without producing the slightest change. Any man would, in fact, have reflected that if he had not se self up to brave the Cardinal, to despise the princes, a stand alone without any other acolytes, — as the Cardi

[1] "Dans un Combat il brille, il tonne:
On le redoute avec raison;
Mais de la façon qu'il raisonne,
On le prendrait pour un oison.

"Gaston, pour faire une harangue,
Éprouve bien moins d'embarras;
Pour quoi Beaufort n'a-t-il la langue?
Pour quoi Gaston n'a-t-il le bras?"

Retz called them, a few melancholy visionary dreamers, — he would long before have either had his liberty or found some supporters. These considerations probably never entered the head of the Duke, whose long seclusion only more strongly confirmed his opposition; and every day the Cardinal received accounts of him which, to say the least, were very disagreeable to his Eminence.

After having failed in poetry, M. de Beaufort had tried painting. He drew the Cardinal's features with charcoal; and as his talent in this art was sufficiently moderate, and did not enable him to attain a great resemblance, that there might be no doubt as to the original of the portrait, he wrote underneath it: "*Ritratto dell' illustrissimo facchino Mazarini.*" M. de Chavigny, having been informed of this, paid the Duke a visit, and requested him to amuse himself in some other manner, or at least to make portraits without inscriptions. The next day the room was full of portraits and inscriptions. M. de Beaufort, like most prisoners, much resembled children, who insist on doing what is forbidden.

M. de Chavigny was informed of the addition made to the portraits. M. de Beaufort, not sufficiently sure of his own powers to risk full-face pictures, had turned his room into a regular historical chamber. This time the governor said nothing; but when M. de Beaufort was playing mall he had the drawings all wiped out and the walls painted in distemper.

M. de Beaufort thanked M. de Chavigny for giving him fresh drawing space, and now divided his room into compartments, each of which he consecrated to some particular feature in the life of Cardinal Mazarin.

The first represented the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini receiving a shower of blows from the stick of Cardinal Bentivoglio, whose servant he had been.

The second, the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini playing the character of Ignatius Loyola in the tragedy of that name.

The third, the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini stealing the portfolio of the Prime Minister, M. de Chavigny, who fancied that he had still got it safe.

And the fourth, the illustrious scoundrel Mazarini refusing to give Laporte any sheets, and telling the King's valet-de-chambre that it was quite sufficient for a King of France to change his sheet once a quarter.

These were subjects for great compositions, and they cer-

tainly surpassed the range of the prisoner's talent; therefore he contented himself with tracing the outlines and placing inscriptions under them.

But the outlines and inscriptions were quite sufficient to excite the susceptibility of M. de Chavigny, who intimated to M. de Beaufort that if he did not choose to renounce his pictures, he would deprive him of all means of executing them. M. de Beaufort replied that since they deprived him of all chance of gaining a reputation by arms, he wished to gain one by painting; and that since he could not become a Bayard or a Trivulce, he wished to become a Michael Angelo or a Raphael.

One day while M. de Beaufort was walking in the prison-yard, his fire was taken away, and with the fire his wood, and with the wood his cinders; so that on his return he did not find one single thing with which he could make a pencil.

M. de Beaufort swore, stormed, roared, said that they wanted to kill him with cold and damp, as Puylaurens, and Marshal Ornano, and the Grand Prior of Vendôme had died; to which M. de Chavigny answered that "he had only to give his word to renounce drawing, or to promise to abandon his historical pictures, and they would furnish him with wood and all that was needed for his fire." M. de Beaufort would not give his word, and remained without fire all the rest of the winter.

And more than that, while the prisoner was absent one day all the inscriptions were scratched out; and the chamber became white and naked without the trace of a fresco.

M. de Beaufort then bought a dog, named Pistache, from one of the jailers — there being no prohibition against a prisoner keeping a dog — and M. de Chavigny gave permission for the dog to change masters. M. de Beaufort remained sometimes for hours shut up with his dog. It was suspected that the prisoner was then engaged in the education of his dog; but no one knew what branch of education he was following. One day, Pistache having been sufficiently drilled, M. de Beaufort invited M. de Chavigny and the officers of Vincennes to a grand representation, which he gave in his chamber. The guests arrived, the apartment was illumined by as many candles as M. de Beaufort could muster, and the spectacle began.

The prisoner, with a morsel of plaster which he had taken from the wall, had drawn down the middle of the room a long white line, representing a cord. Pistache, at his master's first command, placed himself on this line, stood up on his hind legs,

and holding between his forepaws a small cane used for beating clothes, he began to go down the line with all the contortions made by a rope-dancer; then, having gone up and down the line two or three times, he gave the stick back to M. de Beaufort, and began to perform the same evolutions, without a counterweight.

The intelligent animal was overwhelmed with applause.

The spectacle was divided into three parts. The first being finished, the second began.

The question now was to tell what o'clock it was. M. de Chavigny showed Pistache his watch — it was half-past six.

Pistache raised and lowered his paw six times, and at the seventh kept his paw suspended in the air. It was impossible to be plainer — a sun-dial could not have answered better; and, as every one knows, a sun-dial has the disadvantage of not being able to tell the hour except when the sun shines.

Then the dog's next trick was to point out before the whole company the best jailer of all the prisons in France.

The dog made the tour of the circle, and went and laid himself down, in the most respectful manner, at M. de Chavigny's feet.

M. de Chavigny pretended to think it an excellent joke, and laughed heartily; but when he had finished laughing, he bit his lips and began to frown.

At last M. de Beaufort put this most difficult question to Pistache: "Who is the greatest thief in the known world?"

Pistache now went round the room; he did not stop before any one, but going to the door began to scratch and whine.

"You see, gentlemen," said the Prince, "this interesting animal, not finding what I asked for here, goes to look for it out of the room. But never mind, you shall not lose his answer on that account. Pistache, my friend," continued the Duke, "come here."

The dog obeyed.

"The greatest known thief in the known world," said the Prince; "let us see. Is it M. Camus, the King's secretary, who came to Paris with twenty livres, and is now worth ten millions?"

The dog shook his head.

"Is it," continued the Prince, "M. d'Émery, the superintendent, who gave to M. Thoré, his son, on his marriage, an income of three hundred thousand livres, and an hôtel in

comparison of which the Tuileries is a hovel and the Louvre a hut?"

The dog again shook his head.

"What, is it not he?" continued the Prince. "Come, we must inquire further. Can it by chance be that illustrissimo facchino, Mazarini di Piscina?"

Pistache made a most energetic sign of assent, by raising and nodding his head eight or ten times.

"There, gentlemen," said M. de Beaufort to his auditors, who this time dared show no signs of laughter, "you perceive that the illustrissimo facchino, Mazarini di Piscina, is the greatest thief in the known world — at least, Pistache says so."

"Let us, however, proceed to another exercise."

"Gentlemen," continued the Duke of Beaufort, taking advantage of the complete silence which now reigned to give a sort of programme of the third act of this drama, "you may remember that the Duc de Guise taught all the dogs in Paris to leap for Mademoiselle de Pons, whom he proclaimed as the fairest of the fair. Well, gentlemen, that was nothing; for those dogs obeyed mechanically, not knowing how to make any dissidence [M. de Beaufort meant to say difference] between those for whom they ought to leap and those for whom they ought not to leap. Pistache will show you and the governor that he is far superior to his brethren. M. de Chavigny, will you have the goodness to lend me your cane?"

M. de Chavigny gave his cane to M. de Beaufort, who placed it horizontally about a foot from the ground.

"Pistache, my friend," said he, "do me the pleasure to leap for Madame de Montbazon."

Every one laughed. It was known that at the time of his arrest the Duc de Beaufort was Madame de Montbazon's declared lover.

Pistache made not the slightest objection, but leaped gayly over the cane.

"But," said M. de Chavigny, "it appears to me that Pistache does exactly the same thing as his brethren when they leaped for Mademoiselle de Pons."

"Wait," said the Prince.

"Pistache, my friend," he continued, "leap for the Queen."

And he raised the cane six inches higher. The dog leaped respectfully over the cane.

"Pistache, my friend," continued the Duke, raising the cane six inches higher still, "leap for the King."

The dog took a spring, and, in spite of its height, leaped lightly over the cane.

"And now, attention!" continued the Duke, lowering the cane almost even with the ground. "Leap for the illustrissimo facchino, Mazarini di Piscina."

The dog turned his tail to the cane.

"Hallo! what does this mean?" cried M. de Beaufort, describing half a circle from the tail to the head of the dog, and again placing the cane before him; "come, leap, M. Pistache."

But Pistache, as before, turned half round, presenting his tail to the cane.

M. de Beaufort performed the same manœuvre and repeated the same words; but this time Pistache's patience appeared to be exhausted; he threw himself with fury on the cane, tore it from the Prince's hands, and broke it with his teeth.

M. de Beaufort took the pieces from his mouth, and with great gravity restored them to M. de Chavigny, making many excuses, and informing him that the amusements were finished, but that if he wished to attend another representation, in three months Pistache should have acquired some fresh accomplishments.

Three days afterwards Pistache was poisoned.

The culprit was sought for, but, as may be supposed, remained undiscovered. M. de Beaufort caused a tomb to be raised to him, with this epitaph:

"*Here lies Pistache, one of the most intelligent dogs that ever lived.*"

Nothing could be said against this eulogium; M. de Chavigny could not prevent it.

Then the Duke openly declared that the trial of the drug meant for himself had been made on his dog, and one day after dinner he went to bed, crying out that he had the colic, and that Mazarin had caused him to be poisoned.

This fresh prank reached the Cardinal's ears and terrified him greatly. The prison of Vincennes was considered very unhealthy; Madame de Rambouillet had said that the room where Puylaurens, the Marshal Ornano, and the Prior of Vendôme had died was worth its weight in arsenic; and the saying went the rounds. Mazarin therefore gave orders that the

prisoner should, for the future, eat nothing that had not before been tasted; and it was then that La Ramée, the officer, had been placed near him as a taster.

But M. de Chavigny had not yet pardoned the Duke for the impertinences which the innocent Pistache had expiated. M. de Chavigny was one of the late Cardinal's creatures; it was even said that he was his son. So he may well have been somewhat a connoisseur in tyranny; and he set about repaying M. de Beaufort's impudence. He took away from him what steel knives and silver forks had been hitherto allowed him, and gave him silver knives and wooden forks. M. de Beaufort complained; but M. de Chavigny sent word that he had just learnt that the Cardinal, having told Madame de Vendôme that her son was imprisoned at Vincennes for life, feared the prisoner, on hearing such melancholy intelligence, might make an attempt at suicide. A fortnight after, M. de Beaufort found two long rows of trees, about as thick as a man's thumb, planted in the road that led to the tennis-ground; and when he inquired what this meant, he was told that it was to give him shade at some future day. One morning, also, the gardener came to him, and, under pretence of obliging him, told him that he was going to plant some asparagus beds for him. Now, as every one knows, asparagus at the present day takes four years before it can be available; but at that period, in the infancy of gardening, it took five years; and this civility put M. de Beaufort in a great rage.

Then M. de Beaufort thought that it was time to have recourse to one of his forty methods; and he tried the most simple first, which was to corrupt La Ramée; but La Ramée had purchased his present appointment for fifteen hundred crowns, and much valued his situation. Therefore, instead of entering into the prisoner's views, he went and informed M. de Chavigny. M. de Chavigny immediately placed eight men in the Prince's apartment, doubled the sentinels, and tripled their posts. From this time the Prince always marched like a stage king with four men before and four behind him, without reckoning those who marched alongside of him.

M. de Beaufort was, at first, much amused at this severity, which distracted his mind. He repeated continually: "This amuses me — this *diversifies* me." M. de Beaufort meant to say, "This diverts me;" but, as we know, he did not always say what he meant. Then he added, "When I wish to with-

aw myself from the honours you pay me, I have still thirty-ne other methods."

But this distraction at last became annoying. Out of brag-docio, M. de Beaufort bore it for six months; but at the end six months, always seeing eight men sit down when he sat own, rising when he arose, and stopping when he stopped, he gan to frown and to count the days.

This fresh persecution produced a greater asperity of hatred gainst Mazarin. The Prince swore night and morning, talking f nothing but the amputation of the Mazarin ears. It was ightful. The Cardinal, who knew everything that was going n at Vincennes, drew his nightcap down to his neck.

One day M. de Beaufort mustered all the jailers, and in pite of his difficulties in elocution, which had become pro-erbial, he made them a speech, which, to say the truth, had een prepared beforehand.

"Gentlemen," said he, "will you allow the grandson of the ood King Henry IV. to be *soaked* with outrages and ignobilies he meant to say ignominies]. Ventre-saint-gris! as my grand-father said, I have almost reigned in Paris. Do you know I kept guard over the King and monsieur a whole day? The Queen favoured me then, and called me the honestest man in the realm. Gentlemen citizens, liberate me now and I will go straight to the Louvre. I will wring Mazarin's neck. You shall be my body-guards. I will make you all officers and give you good pensions. Ventre-saint-gris! forward, march!"

But, pathetic as it was, the eloquence of the grandson of Henry IV. did not touch those stony hearts; not one stirred a step; which, when M. de Beaufort saw, he told them that they were all beggarly fellows, and made them his inveterate enemies.

Sometimes, when M. de Chavigny came to see him, which he did not fail to do two or three times a week, the Duke took advantage of this to threaten him.

"What would you do, sir," said he, "if one fine day you saw an army of Parisians coming barbed with iron and bristling with muskets to liberate me?"

"Monseigneur," replied M. de Chavigny, bowing most profoundly to the Prince, "I have twenty pieces of artillery on the ramparts and thirty thousand shots in my casemates. I should cannonade them as well as I could."

"Yes; but when you had fired your thirty thousand shots

they would take the prison; and that being taken, I shoul obliged to let them hang you, for which I should certainl very sorry."

And in his turn the Prince bowed most politely to M Chavigny.

"But, monseigneur," replied M. de Chavigny, "at instant the first scoundrel should pass the threshold of doors or set his foot on the ramparts I should be compel much to my regret, to kill you with my own hand, seeing you are intrusted particularly to me, and that I must giv account of you, dead or alive."

And he again bowed to his Highness.

"Yes," continued the Duke; "but as, most certainly, t good fellows would not come here before they had enterta M. Julio Mazarini with a little hanging, you would take sp good care not to lay hands on me; and you would let live, for fear of being torn to pieces with horses by the I sians; that is far more disagreeable than being hanged you see?"

These bitter-sweet pleasantries lasted sometimes ten, s times fifteen, sometimes even twenty minutes, but alv finished in this manner:

M. de Chavigny, turning to the door, —

"Hallo! La Ramée," he cried.

La Ramée entered.

"La Ramée," continued M. de Chavigny, "I recommen de Beaufort most particularly to your care; treat him with consideration due to his name and his rank, and do not sight of him for one single moment."

Then he retired, saluting M. de Beaufort with an iro politeness which made the Prince turn purple with rag

La Ramée had, therefore, become M. de Beaufort's ch his eternal guardian, his very shadow. But, to say the tr the society of La Ramée — a jolly fellow, a free liver, a termined lover of the bottle, a great tennis-player, a creature at heart, and having only one fault in M. de B fort's eyes, that he was incorruptible — was rather an am ment than an annoyance to the Prince.

Unfortunately this feeling was not reciprocated by Ma la Ramée; and although he considered it a great honour t shut up with a prisoner of such vast importance, the plea of living on terms of familiarity with the grandson of H

IV. did not compensate for that which he would have experienced from occasionally visiting his own family.

A man may serve the King excellently well, and, at the same time, be a good father and a good husband. Now, Master la Ramée adored his wife and children, whom he could only see from the top of the wall when they came to walk on the other side of the trenches to afford him this conjugal and paternal consolation. It was too much for him; and La Ramée found that his joyous disposition, which he had considered the cause of his good health, without calculating that it was probably only the result of it, would not hold out long against such a manner of living. This conviction grew stronger when, by degrees, the relations between M. de Beaufort and M. de Chavigny became more and more strained and they never met. La Ramée then found the responsibility pressing more heavily on his head; and as of course he sought for some relief, he received most cordially the offer made to him by his friend, the Marshal de Grammont's steward, to give him an assistant. He had therefore consulted M. de Chavigny on the subject, who informed him that he had no objection whatever to it, provided the applicant was approved of by him.

We consider it perfectly unnecessary to give our readers the physical and moral portrait of Grimaud. If, as we hope, they have not entirely forgotten the first part of this work, they must have retained a clear recollection of that estimable person, who had undergone no other change than the addition of twenty years to his age, an acquisition which had only made him more taciturn, although, since the alteration in his own manners, Athos had given him full liberty of speech.

But at the period Grimaud had been silent for twelve or fifteen years; and a habit of twelve or fifteen years becomes a second nature.

CHAPTER XX.

GRIMAUD GOES ON DUTY.

GRIMAUD therefore entered the prison of Vincennes under the most favourable auspices. M. de Chavigny piqued himself on possessing an infallible eye, which might give weight to the belief that he was really the son of Cardinal Richelieu, who

had always laid claim to this faculty. He therefore examined the applicant with great attention, and fancied that Grimaud's bushy eyebrows, thin lips, hooked nose, and high cheek-bones were perfect indications. He spoke only twelve words to him: Grimaud answered by four.

"There is an invaluable fellow. I thought so at first sight," said M. de Chavigny. "Go and make your terms with La Ramée, and tell him that you suit me exactly."

Grimaud turned upon his heels and went to undergo the far more rigorous examination of La Ramée. What made him more particular was that he knew that M. de Chavigny depended upon him, and he wished to be able to depend upon Grimaud.

Grimaud had precisely the qualities to seduce a life-guardsman who wished for a deputy. Therefore, after a thousand questions which produced exactly one-quarter the number of answers, La Ramée, enchanted by this sobriety in speech, rubbed his hands and enlisted Grimaud.

"Your instructions?" said Grimaud.

"The following: Never leave the prisoner alone; deprive him of every sharp or pointed instrument; and prevent his making any sign to people without or talking too long with his guards."

"Is that all?" inquired Grimaud.

"All for the present," answered La Ramée. "Fresh circumstances will, of course, require fresh instructions."

"Good!" replied Grimaud.

And he went to M. de Beaufort's apartment.

He was engaged in combing his beard which, as well as his hair, he had allowed to grow, to make good his game against Mazarin, by displaying his misery and making a show of his wretched appearance. But as some days before he had fancied that he saw from the tops of the ramparts the beautiful Madame de Montbazon in a carriage, and as her memory was still dear to him, he did not wish to appear before her in the same light as before Mazarin. He had, therefore, in the hope of again seeing her, demanded a leaden comb, which had been granted him.

M. de Beaufort had asked for a leaden comb because, like all fair men, his beard was rather red. He thus colored his beard while he combed it.

Grimaud, on entering, saw the comb, which the Prince had

just placed on the table. He took it up, at the same time making a bow.

The Duke looked with astonishment at this strange figure.

The figure put the comb into his pocket.

"Hallo! What does this mean?" cried the Duke; "and who is this rascal?"

Grimaud did not answer, but bowed a second time.

"Are you dumb?" inquired the Duke.

Grimaud made a sign that he was not.

"Who are you, then? Answer, I command you," cried the Duke.

"A keeper," replied Grimaud.

"A keeper!" exclaimed the Duke. "Well, this hangdog was only wanted to complete my collection. Hallo, there! La Ramée, or some one!"

La Ramée, being thus called for, ran up hastily. Unfortunately for the Prince, having confided his charge to Grimaud, he was just going to set off for Paris, was already in the courtyard, and turned back most unwillingly.

"What is the matter, Prince?" he asked.

"Who is this rascal who takes my comb and puts it into his pocket?" demanded M. de Beaufort.

"He is one of your guards, monseigneur; a fellow of infinite merit, you will appreciate him equally with M. de Chavigny and myself."

"But why does he take my comb?"

"Ah, yes," said La Ramée, "why did you take monseigneur's comb?"

Grimaud took the comb out of his pocket, passed his finger over it, and then looking at and pointing to the large teeth, he contented himself with uttering the single word: "Pointed!"

"It is true," said La Ramée.

"What does the animal say?" demanded the Duke.

"That every pointed instrument is prohibited by the King, monseigneur."

"Ah! are you mad, La Ramée? Why, you gave me the comb yourself."

"And I was greatly to blame, monseigneur; for in giving it I disobeyed orders."

The Duke looked furiously at Grimaud, who had given the comb to La Ramée.

"I foresee that I shall cordially detest this rascal," m
mured the Prince.

In fact, there are no moderate sentiments in a prison. Si
every man and everything is either your friend or your ene
you love or you hate, sometimes with reason, but oftener s
by instinct. Now, by the simple process that Grimaud, at fi
sight, was pleasing to M. de Chavigny and La Ramée, it
lowed that the same qualities that recommended him to
governor and life-guardsman, becoming faults in the prison
eyes, made him instantly obnoxious to M. de Beaufort.

Yet Grimaud did not wish, on the very first day, to unm
himself to the prisoner. He had need, not of a sudden rep
nance, but of a good, healthy, obstinate hatred.

He therefore retired, to give place to the four guards, w
having finished breakfast, were to resume their office near
Prince.

On his part, the Prince wished to bring to perfection a cert
fresh joke on which he had much calculated. He had deman
some lobsters for his morning's breakfast, and determined
passing the day in making a small gallows to hang the fir
in the middle of the room. The red colour which the boil
would give it would leave no doubt as to the allusion;
thus he would have the pleasure of hanging the Cardinal
effigy, in expectation of having him hanged in reality, with
it being possible to reproach him with having hanged anyth
but a lobster.

The day was passed in preparations for the execution.
becomes very childish in prison, and M. de Beaufort was o
character more likely to become so than most men. He w
out for his usual walk, broke off two or three small branches
tined to play a part in his drama, and after many researc
found a piece of broken glass which seemed to give him
keenest pleasure. Having returned to his room, he unravel
his pocket-handkerchief.

But none of these proceedings escaped Grimaud's obser
tion.

The next morning the gallows was ready; and that he mi
erect it in the middle of his room, M. de Beaufort began
sharpen one of the ends with his piece of broken glass.

La Ramée watched him with the curiosity of a father w
thinks that he is about to find a fresh plaything for his c
dren; the four guards watched him with that careless unc

cern which in all times constitutes the principal characteristic of a soldier's countenance.

Grimaud entered just as the Prince had laid the piece of glass down, although he had not yet quite sharpened the end of his gallows, but merely left off to fasten the string to its opposite end.

He cast at Grimaud a glance which retained some portion of the ill-humour that he had conceived toward him the evening before; but as he was mightily pleased with the effect which his new invention could not fail to have, he paid no more attention to him.

Only when he had finished making a sailor's knot at one end of the string and a slip-knot at the other, — when he had cast a glance at his dish of lobsters, and made a secret choice of the most majestic one, — he turned to look for his bit of glass: it had disappeared.

"Who has taken my piece of glass?" demanded the Prince with a frown.

Grimaud made a sign that he had.

"What, you again! — and why did you take it?"

"Yes," said La Ramée, "why did you take his Highness's piece of glass?"

Grimaud, who held the piece of glass in his hand, passed his finger over the edge and said:

"Sharp!"

"It is true, monseigneur," said La Ramée. "Faith! we have indeed got a most valuable fellow here!"

"M. Grimaud," said the Prince, "for your own sake I beseech you never to come within reach of my hand."

Grimaud made a bow, and retired to the end of the room.

"Hush! hush! monseigneur," said La Ramée; "give me your little gallows and I will sharpen it with my knife."

"You?" said the Duke, laughing.

"Yes, I. Was it not that you wanted?"

"Yes, certainly. There, take it — it will be even more droll — take it, my dear La Ramée."

La Ramée, who had not the slightest idea of the cause of the Prince's exclamation, sharpened the end of the gallows in the most skilful manner possible.

"There," said the Prince, "now make me a small hole in the ground, whilst I get the culprit."

La Ramée put one knee to the ground and made a hole.

In the meantime the Prince fastened his lobster to string.

Then he fixed the gallows in the middle of the room, bu ing with laughter.

La Ramée also laughed with all his heart, without v well knowing why he did so, and the soldiers laughed chorus.

Grimaud alone did not laugh.

He went up to La Ramée, and showing him the lobster tu ing round at the end of the string —

"Cardinal!" said he.

"Hanged by his Highness the Duc de Beaufort," continu the Prince, laughing louder than ever, "and by Master Jacq Chrysostome la Ramée, one of the King's life-guardsmen."

La Ramée uttered a cry of terror and rushed at the gallo which he tore from the ground and immediately broke to pie throwing the fragments out of the window. He was going do the same with the lobster, so completely had he lost l senses, when Grimaud took it from him.

"Good to eat!" said he, and put it in his pocket.

This time the Duke had taken so much pleasure in this sc that he almost pardoned Grimaud the part he had played in But on reflection during the day, he weighed the keeper's i tives, and finding that they must be bad, he felt his hatred him much increased.

The story of the lobster, however, to La Ramée's great tress, made none the less a vast sensation, not only within without the prison. M. de Chavigny, who at heart detes the Cardinal, took care to confide the anecdote to two or th well-meaning friends, who instantly spread it abroad.

This gave M. de Beaufort two or three happy days.

In the meantime the Duke had remarked among his gua a man of good appearance, and he endeavoured to cajole h the more willingly that Grimaud became every moment m disagreeable to him. One morning, having taken this n aside, and having managed to converse some time alone w him, Grimaud entered, observed what was passing, and proaching the guard and the Prince with great respect, he t the guard by the arm.

"What do you want?" said the Duke, in a rough manne Grimaud led the guard four steps and pointed to the doo "*Go!*" said he.

The guard obeyed.

"You are absolutely intolerable," said the Duke; "I will chastise you."

Grimaud bowed respectfully.

"You spy, I will break your bones!" cried the exasperated Prince.

Grimaud bowed, at the same time retreating.

"You spy, I will strangle you with my own hands."

Grimaud kept still bowing and retreating.

"And that instantly," continued the Duke, who thought he had better put an end to him immediately. He stretched forth his hands toward Grimaud, who was quietly pushing the guard out and shutting the door behind him.

At the same moment he felt the Prince's hands fastened on his shoulders like a vise; but instead of calling out or defending himself, he gently put his forefinger to his lips and, embellishing his countenance with its most fascinating smile, softly uttered the word —

"Hush!"

A sign, a smile, and a word were so rare with Grimaud that his Highness paused in utter astonishment.

Grimaud took advantage of this moment to draw from the lining of his doublet a charming little note with an aristocratic seal, the original perfume of which had not been entirely destroyed by being long in Grimaud's dress, and presented it to the Duke without saying a word.

The Duke, more and more astonished, let go his hold of Grimaud, took the note, and recognising the writing: "From Madame de Montbazon!" said he.

Grimaud gave a nod of assent.

The Duke tore open the envelope, drew his hand across his eyes, so completely was he dazzled, and read what follows:

"*My dear Duke:*

"*You may trust entirely to the worthy fellow who will give you this letter, for he is the valet of a gentleman of our party who has answered for his fidelity, proved by a service of twenty years. He has agreed to enter into the service of your life-guardsman, and to shut himself up in Vincennes to assist your escape, about which we are now engaged.*

"*The moment of deliverance approaches*; be patient and *courageous, in the assurance that in spite of* time and absence

all your friends have retained for you those sentiments which they before confessed.

"Your wholly and forever affectionate

"Marie de Montbazon.

"P.S. I sign at length; for it would be too much vanity to imagine that after five years' separation you would recognise my initials."

The Duke remained for a minute utterly confounded. What he had been seeking for five years without being able to find it, namely, a faithful servant, an assistant, a friend, had suddenly fallen from the heavens at the moment when he least expected it. He looked at Grimaud with astonishment, and returned to the letter, which he again read from beginning to end.

"Oh, dear Marie," murmured he when he had finished it; "so it was she whom I saw in the carriage. And she still thinks of me, after five years of separation. Morbleu! it is a constancy only to be found in the *Astræa*."

Then turning to Grimaud:

"And you, my good fellow," added he, "you agree to assist me?"

Grimaud made an assenting sign.

"And you are come here for that purpose?"

Grimaud repeated the sign.

"And I was wishing to strangle you!" exclaimed the Duke.

Grimaud began to smile.

"But wait," said the Duke. And he began to poke into his pocket. "Wait," continued he, renewing the fruitless search; "it shall not be said that such devotion to a grandson of Henry IV. was suffered to pass unrecompensed."

The Duke's motion denoted the very best intention in the world; but one of the precautions at Vincennes was never to leave money with a prisoner.

Grimaud, seeing the Duke's disappointment, pulled a purse full of gold from his pocket and gave it to him.

"This is what you are looking for," said he.

The Duke opened the purse, and would have emptied it into Grimaud's hands, but he shook his head.

"Thanks, monseigneur," said he, drawing back, "I am paid."

The Duke was once more surprised. He stretched out his

hand, which Grimaud kissed respectfully. Athos's noble manners had left their impress on his servant.

"And now," said the Duke, "what are we to do?"

"It is eleven o'clock in the morning," replied Grimaud; "at two o'clock monseigneur must ask for a game at mall with La Ramée, and send two or three balls over the ramparts."

"Well, and after that?"

"After that, monseigneur must go to the wall and call out to a man who is working in the moat to throw them back to you."

"I understand," said the Duke.

Grimaud's countenance expressed a lively satisfaction; for from the slight use he habitually made of words, conversation was difficult to him. He made a motion as if to retire.

"Then you will not accept of anything?" said the Duke.

"I should like your Highness to make me a promise."

"And what is that? Speak."

"It is that when we escape, I may go over the first; for if monseigneur should be taken, all the risk he runs is of being returned to prison; while if I be taken, the least they will do is to hang me."

"That is too true," said the Duke; "and on the word of a gentleman, it shall be as you have requested."

"Now," said Grimaud, "I have only one thing to ask monseigneur: it is that he will continue to do me the honor to detest me as much as he did before."

"I will try," replied the Duke.

Some one rapped at the door.

The Duke put the letter and the purse into his pocket and threw himself on his bed. This was known to be his great resource in moments of annoyance. Grimaud opened the door; it was La Ramée, just come from the Cardinal, where the scene had passed which we have already related.

La Ramée cast a searching glance around, and seeing all the symptoms of antipathy between the prisoner and his guard, he smiled, full of internal satisfaction. Then turning to Grimaud:

"Very well, my friend, very well. You have been spoken of favourably in a certain place, and I hope you will soon receive news that will not be disagreeable to you."

Grimaud bowed with an air which he endeavoured to make gracious, and left the room, as his custom was when his superior entered.

"Well, monseigneur," said La Ramée, with his coarse laugh, "so you are still annoyed at that poor fellow."

"Ah! is it you, La Ramée?" said the Duke. "Faith, it was time for you to come. I threw myself on the bed and turned my face to the wall that I might not give way to the temptation of strangling that wretch, Grimaud."

"I fear, then," said La Ramée, making a witty allusion to his subordinate's taciturnity, "that he has said something disagreeable to your Highness."

"I think so, indeed. An Oriental mute! I vow that it was time for you to return, La Ramée, and that I longed to see you."

"Monseigneur is too good," said La Ramée, flattered by the compliment.

"Yes," said the Duke, "I really feel an awkwardness to-day which you will be delighted to see."

"Then shall we have a game of tennis?" said La Ramée mechanically.

"If you like."

"I am at monseigneur's command."

"That is, you are a charming man," said the Duke, "and I almost wish to remain forever at Vincennes, for the pleasure of passing my life with you."

"I believe, monseigneur," said La Ramée, "that it will not be the Cardinal's fault if your wishes be not fulfilled."

"What do you mean? Have you seen him lately?"

"He sent for me this morning."

"Really! To talk about me?"

"What else would you expect him to talk to me about? Really, your Excellence, you are his nightmare."

The Duke smiled bitterly.

"Ah," said he, "if you would accept my offers, La Ramée."

"Come, monseigneur, are we going to talk of that again? —but you must perceive that you are unreasonable."

"La Ramée, I have told you, and I repeat it, that I would make your fortune."

"With what? You will have no sooner got out of prison than your property will be confiscated."

"I shall no sooner be out of prison than I shall be master of Paris."

"Hush, hush! Can I listen to such matters as these? This is a pretty sort of conversation to hold with one of the

ıg's officers. I see plainly, monseigneur, that I must find a ond Grimaud."

'Well, then, we will say no more about it. So the Cardi- and you have been talking about me. La Ramée, you st one day let me put on your dress. I would go in your ce; I would strangle him; and, on the faith of a gentleman, that were a condition, I would return to prison without ıpulsion."

'Monseigneur, I see plainly that I must call Grimaud."

'I am wrong. But what did the *cuistre*[1] say?"

'What did he say? He said that I must watch you closely. ınseigneur, I overlook the term, because it rhymes with *min-re.*"

"And why watch me?" inquired the Duke, somewhat easy.

"Because an astrologer has predicted that you will escape."

"Ah! has an astrologer predicted that?" inquired the uke, starting in spite of himself.

"Oh, mon Dieu! yes. On my word of honour those foolish agicians are always dreaming to torment decent folks."

"And what answer did you give to his most illustrious minence?"

"That if the astrologer in question made almanacs, I ıould advise him not to buy any."

"And why?"

"Because to escape you must become a chaffinch or a wren."

"Unfortunately you are quite right. Come, let us have a ame of tennis, La Ramée."

"Monseigneur, I beg your Highness's pardon, but would you rant me half an hour?"

"What for?"

"Because Monsignor Mazarini is prouder than you are, lthough not of such high birth, and he forgot to invite me) breakfast."

"Do you wish me to send for your breakfast here?"

"No, monseigneur. I must tell you that the confectioner ho lived opposite the château, and who was called Father larteau"—

"Well?"

"A week ago he sold his property to a Parisian confectioner) whom, it seems, the physicians recommended country ·ir."

[1] *Vulgar fellow.*

"Well, what have I to do with this?"

"Wait a bit, monseignure. This cursed confectioner has front of his shop a pile of things which actually make on mouth water."

"You gourmand!"

"Oh, mon Dieu! monseigneur, one is not a gourmand beca one likes to eat what is good. It is natural for man to s for perfection in pies, as in everything else. Now, this ro of a confectioner, I must confess to you, monseigneur, when saw me stopping before his shop, came to me, with his ton all over flour, and said:

"'M. la Ramée, I must have the custom of the prisoner the dungeon. I have purchased my predecessor's establ ment, because he assured me that he supplied the châte and yet I will give you my honour, M. la Ramée, that dur the week that I have been here M. de Chavigny has bought so much as a tartlet of me.'

"'But,' said I, 'perhaps M. de Chavigny fears that y pastry may not be good.'

"'My pastry not good! Well, M. la Ramée, I will m you the judge, and this very moment.'

"'I cannot,' said I. 'It is absolutely necessary for me return to the château.'

"'Well,' said he, 'go about your affairs, as you appear i hurry, but return in half an hour.'

"'In half an hour?'

"'Yes; have you breakfasted?'

"'Faith, I have not.'

"'Well, here is a pie which shall be ready for you, witl bottle of old Burgundy.' And you understand, monseigne as I am fasting, I would, with your Highness's permission"-

And la Ramée bowed.

"Go, then, you animal," said the Duke; "but mark w I give you only half an hour."

"And may I promise your custom to Father Marteau's s cessor, monseigneur?"

"Yes, provided that he does not put mushrooms in his pi You know that the mushrooms of the wood of Vincennes deadly to my family."

La Ramée left the room without taking any notice of t allusion, and five minutes after the officer on guard enter under the pretence of paying honour to the Prince by keepi

him company, but in reality to execute the commands of the Cardinal, who, as has been said, had given orders that they should never lose sight of the prisoner.

But during the five minutes that he had been alone the Duke had found time to reread Madame de Montbazon's letter, which proved that his friends had not forgotten him, but were busily employed for his deliverance. He knew not yet in what manner; but he promised himself that in spite of his taciturnity he would eventually make Grimaud speak. He had all the more confidence in him now that he understood all his conduct, and realised that he had invented all those petty persecutions merely in order to prevent the slightest suspicion of complicity between them.

This ruse gave the Duke a high idea of Grimaud's intellect, and he resolved to place implicit confidence in him.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT THE PIES OF FATHER MARTEAU'S SUCCESSOR CONTAINED.

HALF an hour after, La Ramée returned joyous and happy, like a man who has eaten, or rather has drunken, well. He had found the pies excellent and the wine delicious.

The weather was fine, and favourable for their game. Tennis was played at Vincennes in the open air. Nothing, therefore, was easier than for the Duke to do what Grimaud had told him; namely, to send the balls into the moat.

Yet until the clock had struck two, the Duke was not very awkward; for two o'clock was the hour appointed. Nevertheless he lost every game up to that time, and this gave him an excuse for getting into a rage, and consequently, as is usual, to commit fault after fault.

Therefore, just as the clock struck two, the balls began to fly into the moat, to La Ramée's great delight, who scored fifteen for every ball sent over by the Prince.

So many were sent over that at last the balls began to fail. La Ramée proposed to send some one down to pick them up. But the Duke judiciously observed that it would be time lost; and going up to the rampart, which at this place, as the officer had said, was *fifty* feet high, he saw a man working in

one of those numerous little gardens which the peasants cultivated on the other side of the moat.

"Hé, friend!" cried the Duke.

The man raised his head, and the Duke was near uttering an exclamation of surprise. That man, that peasant, that gardener, was Rochefort, whom he believed to be in the Bastille.

"Well, what do you want up there?" inquired the man.

"Have the kindness to throw back our tennis balls," said the Duke.

The gardener nodded, and began to throw back the balls, which La Ramée and the guards picked up. One of them fell at the Duke's feet; and as it appeared especially meant for him, he picked it up and put it into his pocket.

Then having thanked the gardener by a sign, he returned to his game.

But the Duke was decidedly in bad play, for the balls continued to go out of bounds: two or three went into the moat but as the gardener was no longer there to pick them up, they were lost. Then the Duke said that he was ashamed of such bad play, and did not wish to continue it.

La Ramée was delighted at having so completely beaten a prince of the blood.

The Prince retired to his room and went to bed, as he did almost every day since they had taken his books from him.

La Ramée took away the Prince's clothes, under the pretence of their being covered with dust, to have them brushed but in reality that the Prince might not move. La Ramée was a most careful and prudent man. Fortunately the Prince had found time to conceal the ball under his bolster.

As soon as the door was shut the Duke tore open the covering of the ball with his teeth; for they had left him no sharp instrument. He ate with knives of pliant silver that would not cut.

Under the covering was a letter, containing the following lines:

"*Monseigneur:*

"*Your friends are on the watch, and the hour of your deliverance draws near. Ask for a pie the day after to-morrow from the new confectioner who has purchased the business of the old shop, and who is no other than Noir*

mont, your house-steward. Do not open the pie until you are alone. I hope that you will be satisfied with its contents.

"Your Highness's most devoted servant,

"At the Bastille, as elsewhere,

"Comte de Rochefort.

"P.S.—Your Highness may place the most implicit confidence in Grimaud; he is a most intelligent fellow, entirely devoted to us."

The Duc de Beaufort, whose fire had been restored since he had given up painting, burnt the letter, as he had even more unwillingly burnt Madame de Montbazon's, and he was about to do the same with the ball, when it struck him that it might be useful to him in sending an answer to Rochefort. He was well guarded, for at the movement that he made La Ramée entered.

"Does monseigneur want anything?" said he.

"I was cold," replied the Duke, "and was getting the fire together to warm myself. You know, my dear, that the chambers of the Vincennes prison are famed for their coolness. Ice might be kept here, and you gather saltpetre. Those in which Puylaurens, the Marshal d'Ornano, and my uncle, the Grand Prior, died were on that account worth their weight in arsenic, as Madame de Rambouillet said."

And the Duke lay down again, concealing his ball in his bolster. La Ramée smiled slightly. He was at heart an excellent fellow; and having conceived a great affection for his illustrious prisoner, would have been much distressed had any misfortune befallen him. Now, the successive misfortunes which had happened to the three persons above named were incontestible.

"Monseigneur," said he, "you should not give way to such thoughts as those. Such thoughts kill, and not the saltpetre."

"Ah, my dear," said the Duke, "you are charming. If I could go as you do and eat pies and drink Burgundy at Father Marteau's successor's, it would amuse me."

"Oh, those pies are delicious indeed, and the wine is most excellent."

"At any rate," replied the Duke, "his cellar and kitchen may easily be better than M. de Chavigny's."

"Well," said La Ramée, falling into the snare, "what should prevent you tasting them? Besides, I promised him your custom."

"You are right," said the Duke. "If I must remain here forever, as Mazarin has had the kindness to promise me, I must invent some amusement for my old days; I must become a gourmand."

"Monsiegneur," said La Ramée, "take a piece of advice: do not wait till you are old for that."

"Good," said the Duke to himself. "Every man, to destroy his soul and body, must have received from the munificence of Heaven one of the seven deadly sins, if not two. It seems that Master La Ramée's is gormandising. Never mind; we will take advantage of it." Then he said aloud:

"Well, then, my dear La Ramée, the day after to-morrow is a feast day, is it not?"

"Yes, monsiegneur; it is Whitsuntide."

"Would you like to give me a lesson the day after to-morrow?"

"In what?"

"In gormandising."

"Most willingly, monseigneur."

"But a lesson *tête-à-tête*. We will send the guards to dine at M. de Chavigny's canteen, and will ourselves have a supper the directions for which I leave entirely to you."

"Hum!" said La Ramée.

The offer was tempting; but La Ramée, however unfavourably the Cardinal might consider his appearance, was a shrewd old dog, who knew every trap which a prisoner might lay. M. de Beaufort had, he said, prepared forty plans of escape. Did not this supper conceal some cunning device?

He reflected a moment; but the result of his reflection was that as he was to order the provisions and wine, no powder could be spread on the provisions, or any drug mixed with the wine.

As for making him drunk, the Duke could not have formed any such intention, and the mere idea of it made him laugh. Then a sudden thought made everything easy.

The Duke had followed La Ramée's internal soliloquy with much anxiety, so far as he could observe it by the expression of his face; and at last the officer's countenance brightened.

"Well," said the Duke, "does the proposition suit you?"

"Yes, monseigneur, on one condition."

"And what is that?"

"It is that Grimaud may wait upon us at table."

Nothing could be better for the Prince; yet he had sufficient command over himself to make his countenance assume an expression of ill-humour.

"The devil take your Grimaud!" he exclaimed; "he will quite spoil the feast."

"I will command him to stand behind your Highness, and as he breathes not a syllable, your Highness will neither see nor hear him, and may imagine that he is a hundred leagues distant."

"My dear," said the Duke, "do you know what I perceive most clearly in all this? It is that you distrust me mightily."

"Monseigneur, the day after to-morrow is Whitsuntide."

"Well, and what have I to do with Whitsuntide? Are you afraid that the Holy Ghost will descend on me in the form of a fiery tongue and open the doors of my prison?"

"No, monseigneur, but I have told you what that cursed magician predicted."

"And what did he predict?"

"That the Whitsuntide should not pass without your Highness being out of Vincennes."

"So you believe in magicians, you silly fellow?"

"I?" said La Ramée; "I do not care that for them." And he snapped his fingers. "But it is Monsignor Giulio who cares for them; being an Italian, he is superstitious."

The Duke shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," said he, with good-humour perfectly put on, "so let it be. I accept Grimaud, for otherwise we shall never settle anything. But I want no one else besides Grimaud. You must take the management of everything — you must order the supper as you see fit; all I want is one of those pies you mentioned. You must order it in my name, that Father Marteau's successor may even surpass himself; and you will promise him my custom, not only as long as I remain in prison, but also after I have left it."

"So you still believe that you shall get out of it?" said La Ramée.

"Why," answered the Prince, "even should it not be till

Mazarin's death, I am fifteen years younger than he is. It is true," he added, laughing, "one lives faster at Vincennes."

"Monseigneur!" cried La Ramée — "monseigneur!"

"Or one dies sooner," added the Duke; "it comes to the same thing."

"Monseigneur," said La Ramée, "I am going to order the supper."

"And do you think that you can make anything of your pupil?"

"I hope so, monseigneur," replied La Ramée.

"If he gives you time for it," murmured the Duke.

"What does monseigneur say?"

"Monseigneur says that you need not spare the Cardinal's purse, since he has taken it into his head to burden himself with our support."

La Ramée stopped at the door.

"Whom does monseigneur wish me to send to him?"

"Any one you like, except Grimaud."

"The officer on guard, then?"

"Yes; with his chess-board."

"Yes," and La Ramée left the room.

In five minutes the officer on guard entered the room, and immediately afterwards the Duc de Beaufort appeared to be absorbed in the sublime combinations of checkmating.

Thought is a most singular thing, and what revolutions does one word, or sign, or hope produce in it! The Duke had been five years in prison; and on looking back at these five years, slowly as they had passed, they actually appeared shorter than the two days, the forty-eight hours, that still separated him from the period fixed for his escape.

Then there was one thing which occupied him most intensely. It was in what way his escape was to be accomplished. He had been made to hope for the result, but the mysterious details to be contained in this famous pie had been concealed from him. What friends awaited him? So he still had friends after five years' imprisonment? He was, indeed, a most favoured prince.

He forgot a still more extraordinary thing, that besides these friends a woman had not forgotten him. She might not, perhaps, have been scrupulously faithful to him, but she had not forgotten him, and that was much.

All this was more than enough to engage M. de Beaufort's

hts. Therefore, at chess, as at tennis, the Duke com-
d fault upon fault, and the officer beat him, as La Ramée
eaten him in the morning.
t these successive defeats had this advantage, that they
ht the Prince to eight o'clock in the evening. It was, at
ate, three hours gained. Then came the night, and with
ight came sleep.
least so thought the Duke. But sleep is a most capri-
divinity, and it is exactly when you invoke her that she
s to come. The Duke waited for her till midnight, turn-
nd twisting on his bed like St. Laurent on his gridiron.
st, however, he slept.
t with the day he awoke. He had had the most fantastic
is: wings had sprouted from his sides; then he naturally
voured to fly, and, at first, the wings had performed their
properly; but having reached a certain height, this strange
rt had suddenly failed him, his wings had broken, he had
d to fall into a fathomless abyss, and had awoke covered
perspiration, just as if he had fallen in reality.
en he had again fallen asleep, only to wander afresh in a
inth of dreams, each more senseless than the other.
ely were his eyes closed when his mind, fixed only on
bject, — his escape, — applied itself to attempt this
e. Now the circumstances were quite different: a sub-
ean passage had been discovered which was to conduct
ut of Vincennes; he entered this passage, and Grimaud
walking before him with a lantern in his hand; but
ally the passage grew narrower, and yet the Duke con-
l his course; at last the subterranean passage became so
w that the fugitive in vain endeavoured to go forward;
ides of the walls contracted and squeezed him between
; he made incredible efforts to thrust himself forward,
; was impossible; and yet he saw Grimaud before him
his lantern, still walking on; he wished to call him back
ist in pulling him out of this defile, which was smother-
im, but he could not utter a word. Then, at the other
nity of the passage by which he had come, he heard the
of his pursuers; these steps drew near; he was dis-
ed, and had no longer any hope of escape. The wall
ured to be leagued with his enemies, and to press him
: the more he struggled to escape; at last he heard the
of La Ramée, *and then* he saw him; La Ramée thrust

forth his hand and laid it upon his shoulder, roaring w laughter; he was taken and conducted to that low-vaul chamber where the Marshal Ornano, Puylaurens, and uncle had died; their three tombs were there, mounds ris from the ground; and a fourth grave was open, only wait for a dead body.

Therefore, when he awoke the Duke made as great effo to keep himself awake as he had before made to sleep; a when La Ramée came in the morning he found him so p and worn out that he asked him if he was ill.

"Really," said one of the guards who had passed the ni in the room, and who had not been able to sleep from t toothache caused by the dampness, "monseigneur passed most disturbed night, and two or three times called for h in his dreams."

"What is the matter, monseigneur?" inquired La Ram

"Ah, it is you, you fool!" replied the Duke, "who, with your nonsense about my escaping, turned my head last ev ing, made me dream that I made the attempt and in doing broke my neck."

La Ramée burst into laughter.

"You see, then," said he, "it is an admonition from Heav and I hope that monseigneur will never commit such foll except in your dreams."

"You are quite right, La Ramée," said the Duke, wipi away the perspiration which yet stood on his forehead; do not wish to think of anything for the future but eati and drinking."

"Hush!" said La Ramée.

And he sent away the guards upon various pretences.

"Well?" said the Duke, when they were alone.

"Well?" said La Ramée; "your *déjeuner* is ordered."

"And of what will it consist?" inquired the Prince; "us hear, sir Major-domo."

"Monseigneur promised to depend upon me."

"And will there be a pie?"

"I believe so indeed — as big as a tower."

"Made by Father Marteau's successor?"

"It is ordered."

"And you told him that it was for me?"

"I told him so."

"And what did he say?"

"That he would do his best to satisfy your Highness."

"That 's well," said the Duke, rubbing his hands.

"Zounds, your Excellence!" said La Ramée, "how you take to good living! Not once in all these five years have I seen you with such a joyous countenance."

The Duke saw that he had not been sufficiently master of his feelings; but at that moment Grimaud entered, as if he had been listening at the door, and had perceived that it was necessary to distract La Ramée's attention, and made a sign that he had somewhat to tell him.

La Ramée went up to Grimaud, who spoke to him in a low voice.

In the meantime the Duke recovered himself.

"I forbade this man to come in without my permission!" he exclaimed.

"You must pardon him, monseigneur," said La Ramée, "for I ordered him."

"And why did you do so, when you knew that I disliked it?"

"Monseigneur remembers what has been agreed upon," said La Ramée, "and that he is to wait upon us at that famous supper. Monseigneur has forgotten the supper."

"No; but I had forgotten M. Grimaud."

"Monseigneur knows that there can be no supper without him."

"Well, then, do as you please."

"Come here, Grimaud," said La Ramée, "and hear what I have to say to you."

Grimaud approached with his sourest look.

La Ramée continued:

"Monseigneur has done me the honour to invite me to a *tête-à-tête* supper to-morrow."

Grimaud made a sign as much as to say, "How does that concern me?"

"Yes, yes," said La Ramée, "it concerns you, for you will have the honour to wait on us without reckoning that however hungry and thirsty we may be, something will be left for you in the dishes and at the bottom of the bottles."

Grimaud bowed his thanks.

"And now, monseigneur," said La Ramée, "I demand pardon of your Highness. It seems that M. de Chavigny is to be absent for some days, and before his departure he has some orders to give me."

The Duke endeavoured to exchange a glance with Grimaud, but Grimaud's eye was expressionless.

"Go," said the Duke to La Ramée, "but return as soon as you can."

"Would monseigneur like to take your revenge for yesterday's tennis?"

Grimaud gave an imperceptible nod.

"Yes," said the Duke. "But take care, my dear La Ramée; the days follow, but are not alike; so that I am determined to give you a good beating this morning."

La Ramée left the room. Grimaud followed him with his eyes without the rest of his body deviating a line from the perpendicular, and when he saw the door shut he drew a pencil and sheet of paper hastily from his pocket. "Write, monseigneur," said he.

"And what am I to write?"

Grimaud pointed with his finger and dictated:

"*Everything is ready for to-morrow evening. Keep a look-out from seven till nine o'clock. Have two led horses ready. We shall descend by the first window of the gallery.*"

"What next?" inquired the Duke.

"What next, monseigneur," said Grimaud, quite astonished, "after? Why, sign it."

"And is that all?"

"What can you want more, monseigneur?" replied Grimaud, who was for the strictest brevity.

The Duke signed it.

"And now," said Grimaud, "has monseigneur lost the ball?"

"What ball?"

"That which contained the letter."

"No; I fancied that it might be useful to us. There it is."

And the Duke took the ball from his bolster and gave it to Grimaud.

Grimaud gave his most charming smile.

"Well?" said the Duke.

"Well, monseigneur," answered Grimaud, "I sew the paper in the ball, and while you are playing you must send it over into the trench."

"But perhaps it will be lost."

"No, monseigneur; there will be some one to pick it up."

"A gardener?" asked the Duke.

Grimaud nodded.

"The same as yesterday?"

Grimaud repeated his sign.

"The Comte de Rochefort, is it?"

Grimaud nodded three times.

"But come," said the Duke, "at any rate tell me something about the measures which are to be used to accomplish my escape."

"That is forbidden," said Grimaud, "before the moment of execution."

"Who are those who will await me on the other side of the moat?"

"I know nothing about it, monseigneur."

"But at any rate, if you would keep me from going mad tell me what will be in this famous pie."

"Monseigneur," said Grimaud, "it will contain two daggers, a knotted cord, and a *choke-pear* [1] gag."

"Good! I understand."

"Monseigneur sees that there will be something for each of us."

"We shall take the daggers and cord for ourselves," said the Duke.

"And we will make La Ramée eat the pear," said Grimaud.

"My dear Grimaud," said the Duke, "you do not speak often, but when you do favour us you utter golden words."

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE OF MARIE MICHON'S ADVENTURES.

About the same time that these plans of escape were being laid by the Duc de Beaufort and Grimaud, two horsemen, followed at a short distance by a lacquey, were entering Paris by the Rue du Faubourg St. Marcel. These two men were the Comte de la Fère and the Vicomte de Bragelonne.

It was the first time that the young man had visited Paris; and Athos, by showing him the first view of it from this side, had not indulged in any coquettish sentimentality by giving him

[1] A *poire d'angoisse* (choke-pear) was an improved gag; it was in the shape of a pear, was thrust into the mouth, and by means of a spring expanded itself so as to stretch the jaws to their *utmost extent*.

a favourable impression of his former mistress — the capital. Assuredly the last village of Touraine was more pleasing to the eye than Paris seen from the side of Blois. We must confess, therefore, that this far-famed city produced but a slight effect upon the youth.

Athos had his usual air of calm indifference.

Having reached St. Médard, Athos, who acted as guide through this labyrinth, took the Rue des Postes, then the Rue de L'Estrapade, then the Rue des Fossés St. Michel, then the Rue de Vaugirard. When they came to the Rue Férou the travellers went down it. About half-way down the street Athos raised his eyes with a smile, and pointing to a citizen's house —

"There," said he, "Raoul, there is a house where I passed seven of the happiest and unhappiest years of my life."

The young man smiled in his turn and bowed to the house. His deep love for his protector manifested itself in every act of his life.

As to Athos, we have said that Raoul was not only the centre, but, saving his connections with his old regiment, the sole object of his affections; and it may be easily imagined in what tender way Athos's heart now could love.

The two travellers stopped at the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, at the sign of the *Renard-Vert*. Athos had known this tavern of old. A hundred times had he visited it with his friends; but during twenty years there had been many changes in it, beginning with its landlords.

The travellers turned their horses over to the grooms, and, as they were high-bred animals, recommended them particularly to their care, directing that they should only give them chaff and oats, and should rub their legs and chests with warm wine. They had been travelling twenty leagues a day. Then, having first taken care of their horses, as all genuine cavaliers should do, they asked for two rooms for themselves.

"You must go and dress, Raoul," said Athos; "I am about to introduce you to some one."

"To-day, sir?" asked the young man.

"In half an hour."

The youth bowed. Less robust than Athos, who appeared to be made of iron, he would probably have preferred a bath in that Seine of which he had heard so much and which he *was determined* to find inferior to the Loire, and afterward

bed; but the Comte de la Fère had spoken, and he thought nothing but obedience.

"By the by," said Athos, "take some pains with your let. I wish you to look your very best."

"I hope, sir," said the youth, smiling, "that there is no estion of marriage? You remember my engagements with uise."

Athos also smiled.

"No, do not distress yourself," said he, "although I am ing to introduce you to a woman."

"A woman!" cried Raoul.

"Yes; and I shall expect you to love her."

The youth looked at the Count with some anxiety; but see- g Athos smiling he became more easy.

"And how old is she?" demanded the Vicomte de Brage- nne.

"My dear Raoul, learn once for all," replied Athos, "that at is a question which is never asked. When you can read woman's age in her countenance, there is no use in asking it; hen you cannot, it is indiscreet."

"And is she beautiful?"

"Sixteen years ago she had the character of being not ly the most beautiful, but the most graceful woman in rance."

This answer quite reassured the Viscount. Athos could not ossibly have any project concerning him and a woman who as considered the most beautiful and most graceful woman in rance a year before he was born.

So he went to his room, and, with that foppery so excus- ble in youth, began to follow Athos's instructions; that is, to ake himself look as well as possible. Now, this was easy, nsidering what nature had done for him.

When he came down Athos received him with a paternal nile such as he had been wont to bestow on D'Artagnan in e olden days, but it bore the impress of a deeper tenderness r Raoul.

Athos cast a glance at his feet, his hands, and his hair, those hree signs of high breeding. His dark hair was gracefully arted, as it was then worn, and fell in curls, shading his ace; gray doeskin gloves, matching his hat, set off his elegant nd slender hand; while his boots, of the same color, confined foot that might have belonged to a boy of ten.

"Come," said he in a low voice, "if she is not proud o him, she must be fastidious indeed."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, just the proper tim for making calls. The two travellers went by the Rue d Grenelle, then took the Rue des Rosiers, entered the Rue St Dominique, and stopped before a splendid mansion, situ ated opposite the Jacobins, and surmounted by the arms o Luynes.

"Here it is," said Athos.

He entered the mansion with that firm step which always assures a porter that one has a right to do so. He mounted the steps, and, addressing a footman in magnificent livery, inquired if Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse was at home, and if she would receive M. le Comte de la Fère.

A moment after the footman returned and said that although the Duchesse de Chevreuse had not the honor of knowing Monsieur le Comte de la Fère she requested him to enter.

Athos followed the servant, who led him through a long suite of apartments, and at last stopped before a door that was closed. They were in a salon. Athos made the Vicomte de Bragelonne a sign to remain where he was.

The servant opened the door and announced Monsieur le Comte de la Fère.

Madame de Chevreuse, whom we have so often mentioned in our story of "The Three Musketeers" without having had an opportunity of describing her, was still considered a very beautiful woman. Indeed, although she was now about forty four or forty-five years old, she appeared scarcely thirty-eight Her fair hair was still beautiful, her large intelligent eyes which intrigue had so often opened and love so often shut were still full of fire, and her sylph-like figure was still most symmetrical, so much so that to one who walked behind her she looked like the young girl who jumped over the moat of the Tuileries with Anne of Austria, thereby, in 1623, depriving the Crown of France of an heir.

Moreover, she was still the same giddy creature who cast such a stamp of originality over her amours that they are become a sort of illustration of her family.

She was in a small boudoir, the window of which looked on the garden. This boudoir, according to the fashion which Madame de Rambouillet had introduced on building her hôtel,

was hung with a sort of blue damask with red flowers and gold leaves. There was much coquetry in a woman of the age of Madame de Chevreuse living in such a boudoir, and more than all, in being, as she was at that moment, reclining on a sofa, her head resting against the tapestry.

She held a half-opened book in her hand and had a cushion to support the arm that held the book.

At the servant's announcement she partly raised herself and thrust her head forward with considerable curiosity.

Athos made his appearance.

He was dressed in violet-coloured velvet with laces of the same colour; his points were of dead silver; his mantle had no gold embroidery; and a plain violet-coloured plume drooped over his dark hat. He had boots of black leather; and from his polished girdle hung that sword, with its magnificent handle, which Porthos had so often admired in the Rue Férou, and which Athos would never lend him. The falling collar of his shirt was composed of splendid lace, and lace also hung over the tops of his boots.

In the whole person of him who had just been announced under a name completely unknown to Madame de Chevreuse, there was such an air of the gentleman of high condition that she half rose and gracefully motioned to him to take a seat.

Athos bowed and obeyed. The servant was about to retire, when Athos made him a sign to remain.

"Madame," said he to the Duchess, "I have had the audacity to present myself at your hôtel without being known to you. I have so far succeeded, since you have deigned to receive me. I have now to request you to grant me half an hour's private conversation."

"I grant it to you, sir," replied Madame de Chevreuse, with her most gracious smile.

"But that is not all, madame. I know that I am very presumptuous, but the conversation which I request is *tête-à-tête*, and I am most anxious not to be interrupted."

"I am at home to no one," said the Duchess to the servant. "Leave the room."

The lacquey departed.

There was a moment's silence during which these two persons, who saw at the first glance that they were both of high birth, examined each other without the slighest embarrassment.

The Duchess first broke silence.

"Well, sir," said she, "do you not perceive that I am waiting with impatience?"

"And I, madame," replied Athos, "I am looking with admiration."

"Sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, "you must excuse me for being anxious to know to whom I am speaking. You are of the Court, that is quite evident, and yet I have not seen you there. Have you just come out of the Bastille?"

"No, madame," replied Athos, smiling; "but I am probably on the road that leads to it."

"Ah, in that case tell me quickly who you are, and then take your departure," cried the Duchess, with that tone of gayety which was so charming in her; "for I am already sufficiently compromised without being more so."

"Who I am, madame? My name has been announced — the Comte de la Fère. This name you have never known. Formerly I bore another, which perhaps you knew, but which you have certainly forgotten."

"Tell it me, however, sir."

"Formerly," replied the Count, "I was called Athos."

Madame de Chevreuse opened her large eyes with astonishment. It was evident that this name was not, as the Count had supposed, entirely effaced from her memory, although much confounded amid ancient recollections.

"Athos?" said she. "Wait now."

And she placed her hands on her forehead as if to compel the thousand fugitive ideas so far to concentrate as to enable her for one instant to have a clear view of that brilliant and chequered assemblage.

"Shall I assist you, madame?" asked Athos, smiling.

"Yes," replied the Duchess, already fatigued with the effort; "you will much oblige me."

"This Athos was allied with three young Musketeers who were called D'Artagnan, Porthos, and" —

Athos paused.

"And Aramis," added the Duchess, with great vivacity.

"Yes, Aramis — that's it," said Athos; "you have not, therefore, forgotten that name?"

"No," said she. "Poor Aramis! — he was a charming gentleman, elegant, discreet, and the author of pretty verses. I believe that he has turned out badly," said she.

"Oh, very badly indeed! He has become an abbé."

"Ah, what a sad misfortune!" said Madame de Chevreuse, carelessly playing with her fan. "Really, sir, I am extremely obliged to you."

"For what, madame?"

"For having recalled this recollection to me, which is one of the most agreeable souvenirs of my youth."

"And will you allow me to recall another?"

"Which is connected with the former?"

"Yes and no."

"Faith, sir, you may say anything," replied Madame de Chevreuse. "I am willing to run any risk with a man like you."

Athos bowed.

"Aramis had some connection," said he, "with a young seamstress of Tours."

"A young seamstress of Tours?" said Madame de Chevreuse.

"Yes; a cousin of his who was called Marie Michon."

"Oh, yes, I knew her," said Madame de Chevreuse. "He wrote to her during the siege of La Rochelle, to warn her of a plot which was forming against that poor Buckingham."

"Exactly so," said Athos. "Would you allow me to speak to you concerning her?"

Madame de Chevreuse looked earnestly at Athos.

"Yes," answered she, "provided that you will not speak too severely of her."

"I should then be ungrateful," said Athos; "and I look upon ingratitude not merely as a fault or crime, but as a vice, which is much worse."

"You ungrateful to Marie Michon, sir!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, endeavouring to read Athos's eyes. "How could that be? You never knew her personally."

"Oh, madame, who knows?" replied Athos. "There is a popular proverb that only mountains do not meet; and popular proverbs are often wonderfully true."

"Well, go on, go on, sir," said Madame de Chevreuse eagerly, "for you can have no idea how greatly this conversation amuses me."

"You encourage me," replied Athos, "and therefore I proceed. This cousin of Aramis, — this Marie Michon; in fine, this young seamstress, — in spite of her humble condition, had acquaintances in *the highest* circles. She called the greatest

ladies of the Court her friends; and the Queen, proud as she is as an Austrian and a Spaniard, called her sister."

"Alas!" said Madame de Chevreuse, with a gentle sigh and a slight movement of the eyebrows peculiar to herself, "things are greatly changed since that time."

"And the Queen was right," continued Athos, "for she was much devoted to her, even to the point of serving as the medium of communication with her brother the King of Spain."

"But that is now imputed to her as a great crime," replied the Duchess.

"So that the Cardinal," continued Athos, "the other — the real Cardinal, resolved to arrest poor Marie Michon and send her to the Château deLoches. Fortunately, this project could not be executed so secretly but that it leaked out; the possibility had been provided for. In case Marie Michon were threatened by any danger, the Queen was to send her a book of Hours bound in green velvet."

"Exactly so, sir! You are well informed."

"One morning this green book arrived, being brought by de Prince Marcillac. There was no time to lose. By good fortune. Marie Michon and a servant she had named Kitty wore men's clothes admirably well. The Prince procured for Marie Michon a cavalier's dress, and for Kitty a lacquey's, and gave them two excellent horses. The fugitives quitted Tours in great haste and directed their course toward Spain, trembling at every sound; following by-lanes because they dared not pursue the high road, and asking hospitality when they could not find an inn."

"Well, really, that is exactly the truth!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, clapping her hands; "it would be singular indeed" —

She stopped.

"Shall I follow the two travellers to the end of their journey?" said Athos. "No, madame, I will not waste your time in that manner, and we will accompany them only as far as a little village of Limousin, situated between Tulle and Angoulême, — a little village called Roche-l'Abeille."

Madame de Chevreuse uttered a cry of surprise and looked at Athos with an expression of astonishment which made the old Musketeer smile.

"Wait, madame," said Athos, "for what remains to be told *is far more* singular than what I have yet narrated."

"Sir," cried Madame de Chevreuse, "I take you for a rcerer; I am waiting to hear everything, but really — Never ind, proceed."

"This day the journey had been very long and fatiguing. was cold, for it was the eleventh of October. There was ither inn nor château in this village, and the peasants' ouses were poor and dirty. Marie Michon was a very aristo- atic person, and like the Queen, her sister, she was accus- med to delicate odours and fine linen. She determined, erefore, to ask hospitality at the priest's house."

Athos paused.

"Oh, continue!" said the Duchess; "I told you that I am aiting to hear the whole story."

"The two travellers knocked at the door; it was late, and e priest, who was in bed, called out for them to come in.

"They entered, for the door was not fastened; in villages ere is no suspicion. A lamp was burning in the priest's cham- r. Marie Michon, who made the most charming cavalier in e world, pushed open the door, thrust in her head, and asked spitality.

"'Willingly, young gentlemen,' answered the priest, 'if you ll be satisfied with the remains of my supper and a share my room.'

"The two travellers consulted together a moment. The iest heard them laughing heartily. Then the master, or ther the mistress, replied:

"'Thank you, M. le Curé, I accept your offer.'

"'Then sup, and make as little noise as you can, replied e priest, 'for I also have been travelling all day, and I shall t be sorry to sleep to-night.'"

Madame de Chevreuse was evidently proceeding from sur- rise to astonishment, and from astonishment to stupefaction. er face, as she looked at Athos, had assumed an expression mpossible to describe; it was plain that she would have poken, but yet held her tongue for fear of losing one word ttered by her visitor.

"What next?" said she.

"What next?" replied Athos. "Ah! now comes the most ifficult part."

"Speak! speak! speak! You may tell me all. Besides, it does not concern me: it concerns Mademoiselle Marie Michon."

"Ah! that is true," said Athos. "Well, then, Marie Michon supped with her maid, and after supper, according to the permission which had been given, entered her host's apartment while Kitty settled herself in an easy-chair in the front room where they had supped."

"Really, sir," said Madame de Chevreuse, "unless you are the demon himself, I cannot imagine how you came to know all these circumstances."

"Marie Michon was a charming woman," continued Athos, "one of those crazy creatures into whose minds the strangest ideas constantly enter — one of those beings born for our destruction. Now, as she remembered that her host was a priest, this coquette conceived the notion that it would be a jolly recollection for her in her old age, among many other jolly recollections, that she had brought about the damnation of an abbé."

"Count," exclaimed the Duchess, "on my word of honour you absolutely frighten me."

"Alas!" proceeded Athos, "the poor abbé was not a St Ambrose, and I repeat it — Marie Michon was an adorable creature."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Duchess, seizing Athos's hands, "tell me instantly how you know all these circumstances, or I will send for a monk of the Vieux-Augustins and have you exorcised!"

Athos began to laugh.

"Nothing easier, madame. A cavalier who was himself engaged in an important mission had, an hour before you come to ask hospitality at the priest's dwelling, and just at that very moment the priest was called out to a dying man and was about to leave not only his house, but the village, for the night. Then the priest, having full confidence in his guest, who was, in fact, a gentleman, had given up to him his house, his supper, and his bed. So Marie Michon had asked hospitality of the good abbé's guest, and not of the abbé himself."

"And this cavalier — this guest — this gentleman, who arrived before her" —

"Was myself, the Comte de la Fère," replied Athos, rising and bowing respectfully to the Duchess.

The Duchess remained a moment in utter stupefaction, and *then suddenly* bursting into laughter —

"Ah! by my faith," said she, "it is very droll. This madcap, Marie Michon, got off better than she expected. Sit down, my dear Count, and finish your tale."

"Now, madame, I must make my apologies. I have told you that I was travelling on an important mission. At the break of day I left the room very quietly, leaving my charming bedfellow asleep. In the front room I found the maid servant — wholly worthy of her mistress — also asleep, with her head resting on the chair. Her pretty face struck me. I approached her, and recognised that little Kitty whom our friend Aramis had recommended to her. And thus I learnt that the charming traveller was" —

"Marie Michon," said the Duchess, with great quickness.

"Marie Michon," replied Athos. "Then I left the house, went to the stable, found my horse saddled and my servant ready; we departed."

"And have you never revisited that village?" said Madame de Chevreuse, with great vivacity.

"A year after, madame."

"Well, then?"

"Well, I wished to see the good priest again. I found him much occupied with an event which he could not comprehend. He had, a week before, received a cradle containing a charming little boy of three months old, with a purse full of gold, and a note containing these simple words, 'October 11, 1633.'"

"It was the date of that singular adventure," replied Madame de Chevreuse.

"Yes, but he did not understand anything about it, except that he had passed the night with a dying man; for Marie Michon had herself left his house before his return."

"You must know, sir," said the Duchess, "that Marie Michon, on her return to France in 1643, sent to find out something about that child; for as she was a fugitive, she could not take care of it; but on her return to Paris, she wished to have it brought up near her."

"And what did the abbé say?" demanded Athos.

"That a nobleman, whom he did not know, had taken charge of it, had made himself responsible for its future welfare, and had taken it away with him."

"And it was true."

"Ah! I understand now! That nobleman was yourself — was his father."

"Hush! Do not speak so loud, madame. He is there."

"He is there!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, rising quickly, — "he is there! — my son — the son of Marie Michon — is there! I must see him this instant!"

"Observe, madame, that he neither knows his father nor his mother," said Athos.

"You have kept the secret, and have brought him here, thinking that it would make me very happy. Oh, thanks, thanks, sir!" exclaimed Madame de Chevreuse, seizing his hand and endeavouring to carry it to her lips. "Thanks! You have indeed a noble heart!"

"I bring him to you," said Athos, withdrawing his hand, "that you may, in turn, do something for him, madame. Till now I have carefully watched his education, and I have made him, I think, an accomplished gentleman. But the time is come when I find myself obliged to resume the wandering and dangerous life of a party-man. To-morrow I enter upon a hazardous adventure which may cost me my life. Then he must depend on you for his progress in the world, where he must play a part."

"Oh, you may be assured on that point!" exclaimed the Duchess. "Unfortunately I have but little influence at present, but what I have shall be exerted for him. As for his fortune and his title" —

"Do not distress yourself about that, madame. I have resigned to him the estate of Bragelonne, which I inherited, and which gives him the title of Viscount and ten thousand livres a year."

"Upon my honour, sir," said the Duchess, "you are a noble gentleman. But I am most eager to see our young Viscount. Where is he?"

"Out there in the salon. I will bring him if you wish it."

Athos went toward the door. The Duchess stopped him.

"Is he handsome?" said she.

Athos smiled.

"He resembles his mother," said he.

At the same time he opened the door and made a sign to the young man, who appeared on the threshold.

Madame de Chevreuse could not refrain from uttering an exclamation of joy at seeing such a charming cavalier, who *surpassed* the proudest hopes that she could have formed.

"Viscount, come near," said Athos; "Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse permits you to kiss her hand."

The young man approached, with his sweet smile and head uncovered, put one knee to the ground and kissed Madame de Chevreuse's hand.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, turning to Athos, "do you not, in pity for my timidity, tell me that this lady is the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and not rather the Queen?"

"No, Viscount," said Madame de Chevreuse, taking his hand and making him sit near her, and looking at him with eyes sparkling with delight. "No, unfortunately I am not the Queen, for if I were I would immediately treat you according to your merits. But such as I am," she continued, with difficulty refraining from pressing her lips to his noble forehead, — "such as I am, let me know what career you wish to follow."

Athos, still standing, looked at them both with an indescribable expression of happiness.

"Why, madame," said the young man, with his sweet and melodious voice, "it appears to me that there is but one career for a gentleman — that of arms. M. le Comte has educated me, I believe, with the intention of making me a soldier; and he led me to hope that on coming to Paris he would introduce me to some one who would recommend me to the Prince."

"Yes, I comprehend. It is a good thing for a young soldier like you to serve under a general like the Prince. But let us see; wait; at present I am on bad terms with him, on account of the disputes of my mother-in-law, Madame de Montbazon, with Madame de Longueville. But through the Prince de Marcillac — ah, really, Count, that 's it — M. le Prince de Marcillac is an old friend of mine; he will recommend our young friend to Madame de Longueville, and she will give him a letter to her brother the Prince, who loves her too dearly not to comply immediately with her wishes."

"That will do excellently well," said the Count; "only may I recommend the very greatest despatch. I have reasons for wishing the Viscount to leave Paris before to-morrow evening."

"Do you wish your name to be mentioned, Monsieur le Comte?"

"It were better perhaps for him that it should not be known that he ever knew me."

"Oh, sir!" cried the young man.

"You know, Bragelonne," said Athos, "that I never do anything without sufficient reason."

"Yes, sir," said the young man, "I know that you are wisdom itself, and I will obey you, as I have always done."

"Well, then," said the Duchess, "leave him with me, Count. I will send for the Prince de Marcillac, who is fortunately in Paris, and will not let him go till the matter is settled."

"A thousand thanks, Madame la Duchesse. I have much to do to-day; and on my return at about six this evening, I shall expect the Viscount at the hotel."

"What are you going to do this evening?"

"We are going to the Abbé Scarron's. I have a letter for him, and expect to meet one of my friends at his house."

"Very well," said the Duchess. "I will look in there myself for a minute or two. Do not leave his house until you have seen me."

Athos bowed, and was leaving the room.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte," said the Duchess, laughing, "do old friends part so ceremoniously?"

"Ah," murmured Athos, kissing her hand, "had I but sooner known Marie Michon was such a charming creature" —

And he left the room with a sigh.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ABBÉ SCARRON.

THERE was a house in the Rue des Tournelles which all the chairmen and lacqueys of Paris knew; and yet it was not the habitation of a nobleman or financier. There was no feasting there; never any playing; and very seldom dancing.

Yet it was the rendezvous of fashionable society, and all Paris went there.

This house belonged to little Scarron.

There was so much laughter at the witty abbé's, so much news was detailed, this news was so rapidly discussed, analysed, and transmuted, either into tales or epigrams, that every one wished to pass an hour with little Scarron, to hear what

e said, and to retail it in other places. Many were also ambitious of letting off their own witticisms; and if they were unny, of course they themselves were acceptable.

The little Abbé Scarron — who, after all, was only an abbé ecause he possessed an abbey, and not because he was in rders — had formerly been one of the most dandy prebendaries of the town of Mans where he lived. One day, during he carnival, he took it into his head to cause the greatest musement to this good town of Mans, of which he was the ife and soul; so he made his valet rub him all over with oney; then, having opened a feather bed, he rolled himself n it, so that he became the most grotesque specimen of the bird kind that ever was seen. He then commenced a series of visits to his male and female friends, in this strange costume. At first he was followed with astonishment; then with laughter and cries; then the porters began to abuse him, and the children to pelt him with stones; until at last he was obliged to scamper off to avoid the projectiles. As soon as he began to fly, every one followed him; he was tracked, hunted, and ferreted out of every retreat, and he found no other means of escaping his pursuers than by throwing himself into the river. He swam like a fish, but the water was as cold as ice. Scarron was in a violent perspiration; the cold seized him, and when he reached the other side he was paralysed.

Every method which was known at that time was tried to restore the use of his limbs; and they made him suffer so much by their treatment that he dismissed his physicians, declaring that he much preferred the disease. Then he went back to Paris, where his character as a man of talent had been already established. There he had a chair made, of his own invention; and one day when he paid Anne of Austria a visit in this chair, she, being delighted with his talent, asked him if he would not like to have some title.

"Yes, your Majesty, there is one of which I am vastly ambitious," replied Scarron.

"And what is that?" demanded Anne of Austria.

"The title of your *Invalid*," replied the abbé.

And Scarron was thenceforth nominated the "Queen's Invalid," with a pension of fifteen hundred livres.

From this moment, with no further anxiety for the future, Scarron had led a jolly life, living on his pension and the income of his abbey.

One day, however, one of the Cardinal's emissaries gave him a hint that he was wrong in receiving the coadjutor.

"And why?" asked Scarron; "is he not a man of high birth?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Amiable?"

"Without doubt."

"Witty?"

"Unfortunately he has too much wit."

"Well, then," said Scarron, "why do you wish me to discontinue my acquaintance with such a man?"

"Because he thinks ill of" —

"Really! Of whom?"

"Of the Cardinal."

"Why!" replied Scarron, "I continue to receive M. Gilles Despréaux, who thinks ill of me; and would you have me refuse to receive the coadjutor because he thinks ill of another person? Impossible!"

Here the conversation dropped; and Scarron, from a spirit of opposition, had seen even more of M. de Gondy than before.

Now, the very morning of the day which we have reached, and which was the last day of the quarter, Scarron, as usual, had sent his lacquey to the pension-office, with a receipt, to obtain his three months' pay; but an answer had been returned "that the State had no more money for the Abbé Scarron."

When the lacquey brought this answer to Scarron, the Duc de Longueville was with him, and offered to give him a pension of twice the amount of which Mazarin had deprived him; but the cunning invalid took good care not to accept it. He managed so well, however, that at four o'clock in the afternoon the whole capital had heard of the Cardinal's refusal. It happened to be Thursday, the abbé's reception day. The people went there in crowds, and through the whole city there was bitter criticism on the Cardinal's action.

Athos met two gentlemen in the Rue St. Honoré. He did not know them. They were on horseback and followed by a lacquey, as he also was, and going the same way. One of them took off his hat and said:

"Can you believe it, sir! — that scoundrel Mazarin has deprived poor Scarron of his pension!"

"It is ridiculous," said Athos, bowing at the same time to the two gentlemen.

"Evidently you are a decent man, sir," said the same gentleman who had before addressed Athos; "and this Mazarin is really a scourge."

"Alas, sir," replied Athos, "be careful to whom you say this!"

And they separated with many expressions of politeness.

"This happens very well, as we must go there this evening," said Athos to the Viscount; "we will pay our compliments to the poor man."

"But who, pray, is M. Scarron, who is putting all Paris into such commotion?" asked Raoul. "Is he a disgraced minister?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! no, Viscount," replied Athos; "he is simply a little gentleman, of considerable talent, who seems to have fallen into disgrace with the Cardinal, for having composed some quatrain against him."

"And do gentlemen make verses?" demanded Raoul, with great simplicity. "I thought that it was beneath them."

"Yes, my dear Viscount," replied Athos, laughing, "when they make bad ones; but when they make good ones, it raises their reputation. Look at M. de Rotrou. And yet," continued Athos, in the tone of one giving a piece of salutary advice, "I believe that it is better not to make any."

"Then," said Raoul, "this M. Scarron is a poet?"

"Yes. Now you are prepared, Viscount, be very guarded in that house. Speak only by gestures, or rather listen."

"Yes, sir," replied Raoul.

"You will perceive me talking a good deal with one of my friends, the Abbé d'Herblay, whom you have often heard me mention."

"I remember it, sir."

"Come toward us sometimes, as if to address us, but without speaking to us; and do not listen to us. This plan will keep troublesome people from interrupting us."

"Very well, sir; I will strictly obey you."

Athos paid two visits in Paris; and then at about seven o'clock they went toward the Rue des Tournelles. The street was blocked up by chairmen, horses, and footmen. Athos pushed through them, and entered, followed by the young man. The first person that attracted his attention on entering was Aramis, standing near a very large easy-chair

on casters, and covered by a canopy of tapestry; under this, in a state of perpetual motion and enveloped in a brocaded cloak, was a little face, young and gay enough, but sometimes turning pale, although his eyes never lost their animated, talented, and courteous expression. It was the Abbé Scarron, always gay, jesting, complimenting, suffering, and scratching himself with a small stick.

Around this kind of movable tent a crowd of gentlemen and ladies was pressing. The apartment was very neat, and suitably furnished. Large silk curtains, embroidered with flowers the colours of which had formerly been brilliant, but were now a little faded, hung from the lofty windows; the tapestry was unpretentious, but in good taste. Two lacqueys, extremely polite and drilled to good manners, served with dignity.

On seeing Athos, Aramis came up to him, took him by the hand, and introduced him to Scarron, who expressed as much pleasure as respect for his new guest, and paid an elegant compliment to the Viscount. Raoul was quite confused, for he was not prepared for the majesty of such cleverness. Nevertheless, he bowed gracefully.

Athos next received the compliments of two or three gentlemen to whom Aramis introduced him. Then the slight disturbance caused by his entrance gradually subsided, and the conversation became general.

In four or five minutes, which Raoul employed in recovering himself and in taking a topographic view of the assembly, the door opened and a servant announced Mademoiselle Paulet.

Athos touched Raoul on the shoulder.

"Look at that lady, Raoul," said he, "for she is a historical personage. Henry IV. was going to her house when he was assassinated."

Raoul started. At every moment, for many days, some curtain had been raised for him, discovering some heroic incident. This woman, still young and beautiful, had known and conversed with Henry IV.

Every one eagerly pressed toward the new-comer, for she was greatly in fashion. She was tall, slender, and symmetrical, with a profusion of golden hair, such as Raphael loved and Titian bestowed on all his Magdalens. This tawny or yellow colour, or perhaps that sort of regal preëminence which she had acquired over all other women, had caused her to be denominated the Lioness.

Our fair ladies of the present day, who are ambitious of this fashionable title, will thus know that it is derived, not from England, as they may perhaps have imagined, but from their beautiful and talented countrywoman, Mademoiselle Paulet.

Mademoiselle Paulet went straight up to Scarron, in the midst of the universal murmur which her arrival had caused.

"Well, my dear abbé," said she, in her calm and gentle voice, "so you are become a poor man. We heard of it this afternoon at Madame de Rambouillet's. M. de Grasse told it to us."

"Yes, but the State becomes rich," replied Scarron. "One should learn to sacrifice one's self for one's country."

"The Cardinal will buy fifteen hundred livres' worth more of pomatum and perfumes every year," said a frondeur, whom Athos at once recognised as the gentleman whom he had met in the Rue St. Honoré.

"But what will the muse say?" replied Aramis, in his mellifluous voice, — "the muse, who requires gilded mediocrity. For, after all:

> "'*si Virgilio puer aut tolerabile desit*
> *hospitium, caderent omnes à crinibus hydri.*'"

"Good!" said Scarron, holding his hand out to Mademoiselle Paulet; "but if I no longer have my hydra, at any rate I still have my Lioness."

Every word that Scarron uttered that evening appeared exquisite. It is the privilege of persecution. M. Ménage was in ecstasies of enthusiasm.

Mademoiselle Paulet took her accustomed place; but before she sat down, she cast, from the height of her stature, a queenly glance over all the assembly, and her eyes rested on Raoul.

Athos smiled.

"You have been observed by Mademoiselle Paulet, Raoul. Go and pay your respects to her. Tell her what you are — frankly a youth from the provinces; but take care that you do not mention Henry IV."

The Viscount went, blushing, toward the Lioness, and was soon lost in the crowd of men that surrounded her chair. This made two distinct groups — that which surrounded M. Ménago, and that which surrounded Mademoiselle Paulet. Scarron ran from one to the other, steering his movable chair amid all

this crowd with as much skill as the most experienced pilot would direct a barque through a sea studded with reefs.

"When shall we have some talk together?" said Athos to Aramis.

"Presently," he answered; "there is not yet sufficient company assembled, and we should be observed."

At this moment the door opened, and the attendant announced M. le Coadjuteur.

At this name every one turned round, for it was one which was already beginning to be renowned.

Athos did the same, for he knew the Abbé de Gondy only by name.

He saw a little dark man, ill-formed and near-sighted, extremely awkward with his hands in everything but the use of the sword and pistol. As soon as he came in he ran against a table, which he nearly upset, but yet he had something haughty and fierce in his countenance.

Scarron turned and went toward him with his chair. Mademoiselle Paulet bowed and waved her hand to him from her seat.

"Well," said the coadjutor, on seeing Scarron, which was not until he almost ran against him, "so you are in disgrace, abbé?"

This was the sacramental expression; it had been used a hundred times during the evening; and Scarron had now reached his hundredth *bon mot* on the same subject. He was therefore nearly exhausted, but a desperate effort saved him.

"M. le Cardinal Mazarin," said he, "has been kind enough to take thought of me."

"Prodigious!" exclaimed Ménage.

"But how will you manage to receive us?" continued the coadjutor. "If your income decreases, I must make you a canon of Notre Dame."

"Oh, no," said Scarron; "I should compromise you too much."

"Then you have resources unknown to us?"

"I will borrow from the Queen."

"But her Majesty has nothing of her own," said Aramis; "does she not live under the rule of community of goods?"

The coadjutor turned and smiled at Aramis, making a friendly sign to him.

ɹrdon, my dear abbé," said he to him; "you are late, and
; make you a present."
: what?" said Aramis.
' a hat band."
ry one turned toward the coadjutor, who drew from his
; a silk band of singular form.
ı!" said Scarron, "that is a *fronde!*"
ɪactly so," said the coadjutor; "everything is made *à*
nde. Mademoiselle Paulet, I have a fan for you, *à la*
. I will give you the address of my glover, D'Her-
he makes gloves *à la fronde.* And of my baker to you,
n, with unlimited credit: he makes excellent bread *à*
nde."
mis took the band and fastened it round his hat.
ɨhis moment the door opened and the servant cried out
ɹud voice:
adame la Duchesse de Chevreuse."
ɨhe name of Madame de Chevreuse every one arose.
ɾron directed his chair rapidly toward the door. Raoul
ɨd; Athos made a sign to Aramis, who went and took his
in the embrasure of the window.
ɨhe midst of the respectful compliments that greeted her
ɪce, the Duchess was evidently looking for some person
ɪg. At last she discovered Raoul, and her eyes sparkled;
ɨrceived Athos, and became thoughtful; she saw Aramis
embrasure of the window, and made an imperceptible
ı of surprise behind her fan.
propos," she said, as if to drive away the ideas that
ed in spite of all her efforts. "How is poor Voiture?
u know, Scarron?"
That! is M. Voiture ill?" demanded the gentleman who
ɔoken to Athos in the Rue St. Honoré; "and what has he
loing now?"
e has been playing, without having made his servant
him a change of linen," said the coadjutor; "so that he
ɹught cold, and is dangerously ill."
nd where is that?"
h, mon Dieu! at my house. You must know that poor
re had made a solemn vow not to play any more. At the
ɪtion of three days he could no longer keep it, and came
bishop's palace, that I might release him from his vow.
·tunately at that very moment I was engaged on matters

of serious consequence with the excellent Broussel, at the farther end of my apartment, when Voiture perceived the Marquis de Luynes seated at a table, waiting for some one to play with him. The Marquis calls him, and invites him to sit down at the table; Voiture answers that he cannot play till I have released him from his vow. Luynes answers for me and takes the sin upon himself; Voiture sits down at the table and loses four hundred crowns, takes cold on going out, and goes to bed not to get up again."

"Ah, is he so bad as that — our dear Voiture?" demanded Aramis, half concealed behind the curtain.

"Alas!" replied M. Ménage, "he is very ill, and this great man will perhaps leave us — *deseret orbem.*"

"Good!" said Mademoiselle Paulet, with considerable acrimony. "He die! He will look out for that! He is surrounded by sultanas, like a Turk. Madame Saintot has hastened to him, and is giving him broths; La Renaudot is warming his sheets; and even our friend, the Marquise de Rambouillet, sends him gruel."

"You do not love him, my dear Parthenia," said Scarron, laughing.

"Oh, what injustice! My dear invalid, I hate him so little that I would with pleasure cause Masses to be said for the repose of his soul."

"You are not called Lioness for nothing, my dear," said Madame de Chevreuse, "for you bite very sharply."

"You ill-treat a great poet, it seems to me, madame," hazarded Raoul.

"He a great poet? It is plain enough that you are just come from the country, Viscount, as you have told me, and that you never saw him. He! — a great poet? Why, he is not five feet high."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried a tall, thin, black man with a haughty mustache and an enormous rapier; "bravo, fair Paulet! It is time, at last, to put that little Voiture into his proper place. I openly declare that I think I know something of poetry, and have always found his detestably bad."

"And who, pray, is this captain?" said Raoul to Athos.

"M. de Scudéry."

"The author of 'Clélie' and the 'Grand Cyrus'?"

"At any rate he composed it with the assistance of his sister, who is conversing with that pretty woman near M. Scarron."

Raoul turned and saw two new visitors who had just entered — one of them had a very charming, delicate, and melancholy face, framed in a profusion of glossy black hair, with eyes as soft as those beautiful violet-coloured flowers of the pansy, with their sparkling gold calyxes; the other, apparently her guardian, was cold, withered, and yellow, the very personification of a genuine duenna or devotee.

Raoul promised to himself not to leave the room without having spoken to the pretty young girl with the soft eyes, who, by a strange freak of his imagination, although she had not the slightest resemblance to her, reminded him of his little Louise, whom he had left ill at the Château de la Vallière, and whom in the midst of this brilliant assemblage he had for a time forgotten.

In the meantime Aramis went up to the coadjutor, who, with a smiling countenance, managed to whisper a few words in his ear. Aramis, in spite of the power he had over himself, could not refrain from slightly starting.

"Laugh, please," said M. de Gondy; "we are observed;" and he went to talk to Madame de Chevreuse, who was encircled by a vast crowd.

Aramis pretended to laugh, to distract the attention of some curious listeners; and seeing that Athos had been for some moments in the embrasure of the window, he rejoined him without affectation, after having spoken some casual words to those around him.

As soon as they met again, they commenced a conversation accompanied by many gestures.

Raoul then went toward them, as he had been directed by Athos.

"It is one of Voiture's rondeaus which M. l'Abbé is repeating to me," said Athos aloud, "and I find it incomparable."

Raoul remained some moments near them, and then went to mingle with the group around Madame de Chevreuse, which Mademoiselle Paulet and Mademoiselle Scudéry had also joined.

"Well, for my part," said the coadjutor, "I cannot allow myself to be entirely of M. de Scudéry's opinion. On the contrary, I think that M. de Voiture is a poet — but a poet pure and simple. He has no political ideas whatever."

"So then?" said Athos.

"It is to-morrow," answered Aramis hastily.

"At what hour?"

"At six o'clock."

"Where?"

"At St. Mandé."

"Who told you so?"

"The Comte de Rochefort."

Some one approached them.

"And as to his philosophical ideas? It was there poor Voiture failed. I am of the coadjutor's opinion — a poet pure and simple."

"Yes, certainly, in poetry he was prodigious," said Ménage. "And yet posterity, even while admiring, will lay one fault to his charge; namely, of having given himself too great a license in the composition of his poetry. He has murdered poetry without knowing it."

"Murdered — that is the word," said Scudéry.

"But what masterpieces his letters are!" said Madame de Chevreuse.

"Oh, in that respect he is a perfect paragon," said Mademoiselle Scudéry.

"It is true," said Mademoiselle Paulet; "but only when he is jesting; for he is actually pitiable in his serious letters; and if he does not say things crudely, you must confess that he says them ill."

"But, at any rate, you must confess that his humour is inimitable."

"Yes, certainly," said Scudéry, twisting his mustache. "Only I find that his humour is forced and his pleasantry too familiar. Look at his 'Letters from the Carp to the Pike.'"

"Without reckoning," said Ménage, "that his best inspirations came from the Hôtel de Rambouillet. For instance, his 'Zélide and Alcidalée.'"

"For my part," said Aramis, joining the circle and bowing respectfully to Madame de Chevreuse, who answered him by a gracious smile, — "for my part I will also accuse him of being too free with great people. He often failed in respect toward Madame the Princess, M. le Maréchal d'Albret, and M. de Schomberg; toward the Queen herself."

"How! Toward the Queen?" demanded Scudéry, bringing his right leg forward, as if to place himself on guard. "Zounds! I did not know that. And how did he fail in respect toward her Majesty?"

"Do you not know his piece, 'Je pensais'?"

"No," said Madame de Chevreuse.

"No," said Mademoiselle de Scudéry.

"No," said Mademoiselle Paulet.

"In fact," said Aramis, "I believe that the Queen communicated it to very few persons; but I have it on the very best authority."

"And do you know it?"

"I believe that I can recollect it."

"Let us have it — let us have it!" they all exclaimed.

"You must know the circumstances under which it was produced," said Aramis. "M. de Voiture was in the Queen's carriage, who was taking an airing with him *tête-à-tête* in the forest of Fontainebleau. He pretended to be thinking, in order that the Queen might ask him what he was thinking of, which she did not fail to do.

"'What are you thinking about, M. de Voiture?' said her Majesty.

"Voiture smiled, pretended to reflect five seconds that it might be believed he composed extempore, and answered:

"'*Je pensais que la Destinée,*
Après tant d'injustes malheurs,
Vous a justement couronnée
De gloire, d'éclat, et d'honneurs;
Mais que vous étiez plus heureuse
Lorsque vous étiez autrefois,
Je ne dirai pas amoureuse —
La rime le veut toutefois.'"

Scudéry, Ménage, and Mademoiselle Paulet shrugged their shoulders.

"Wait, wait," said Aramis, "there are three stanzas."

"Oh, say three couplets," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéry; "it is neither more nor less than a ballad."

"'*Je pensais que ce pauvre Amour,*
Qui toujours vous prêta ses armes,
Est banni loin de votre cour,
Sans ses traits, son arc, et ses charmes:
Et de quoi je puis profiter
En passant près de vous, Marie,
Si vous pouvez si maltraiter
Ceux qui vous ont si bien servie.'"

"Oh, as to this last passage," said Madame de Chevreuse,

"I do not know whether it is according to the rules of poetry, but I ask for your indulgence toward him because it is true; and Madame de Hautefort and Madame de Sennecey will unite with me, should it be necessary, without reckoning M. de Beaufort."

"Proceed, proceed," said Scarron; "it is of no consequence to me now. From this morning I am no longer the Queen's invalid."

"The last couplet," said Madame de Scudéry, — "the last couplet, let us have it!"

"Here it is," said Aramis, "and it has the advantage of using proper names, so that there can be no possibility of mistake.

"'*Je pensais — nous autres poètes*
Nous pensons extravagamment —
Ce que dans l'humeur où vous êtes
Vous feriez, si dans ce moment
Vous avisiez en cette place
Venir le Duc de Buckingham,
Et lequel serait en disgrâce
Et duc ou du père Vincent.'"[1]

At this last stanza there was but one exclamation at Voiture's impertinence.

"But," said the young lady with the soft eyes, in a low voice, — "but I am unfortunate enough to think these verses quite charming."

This was also the opinion of Raoul, who, going up to Scarron, said, with a blush:

"M. Scarron, will you be so obliging as to tell me who that young lady is who is single in her opinion against all this illustrious assembly?"

"Aha, my young Viscount," said Scarron, "I believe that you wish to propose an alliance, offensive and defensive, with her."

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[1] I was thinking that Fate — after so many undeserved misfortunes — has with justice crowned you — with glory, splendour, and honours; — But that you were happier — when in the days gone by you were — I will not say in love — and yet that is what the rime will have it!

I was thinking that poor Cupid — who always lent you his weapons — is banished far from your Court — deprived of his arrows, his bow, and his charms: and of what advantage it will be to me — in being near you, Marie, — if you can thus ill-treat — those who have served you so well!

I was thinking (and we poets — are apt to have wild thoughts) — what in your present mood — you would do if at this moment — you should perceive the Duke of Buckingham coming into this place, and which would be in disgrace — the Duke or Père Vincent.[2]

[2] Père Vincent was the Queen's Confessor.

ul coloured again.
:onfess," said he, "that I think the verses very pretty."
ıd so they really are," said Scarron. "But hush!
ʒ poets we must not talk in this manner."
ıt I," said Raoul, "have not the honour of being a poet,
asked you" —
ı, true — who that young lady was? It is la belle
ne."
ill you excuse me, sir?" said Raoul, "but I am not wiser
efore. Alas! I am a provincial."
hich means that you do not very well understand the
st that here flows from every mouth. So much the
young man, — so much the better. Do not try to under-
it, you will only waste your time, and by the time you
ecome capable of understanding it it is to be hoped that
no longer be spoken."
ıerefore you will pardon me, sir," replied Raoul, "and
ill also deign to inform me who it is whom you call
le Indienne."
es, certainly. She is one of the most charming persons
world — Mademoiselle Françoise d'Aubigné."
she of the family of the famous Agrippa, the friend of
IV.?"
ıe is his granddaughter, and is just come from Marti-
; which is the reason of my calling her la belle Indienne."
ul opened his eyes wide, and they met those of the young
who smiled.
talk about Voiture continued.
r," said Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, addressing Scarron,
ıe might join in the conversation which he held with
ung Viscount, "do you not wonder at poor Voiture's
s? Only hear how they are plucking him in the midst
ir commendations. One takes from him common sense,
:r poetry, another originality, another humour, another in-
lence, another — But, bon Dieu! what will they leave him
ve this perfect paragon, as Mademoiselle Scudéry said?"
rron and Raoul began to laugh. La belle Indienne,
shed at the effect she had produced, dropped her eyes
:sumed her simple air.
ıe has great talent," said Raoul to himself.
os, still in the embrasure of the window, overlooked all
:ene, with a disdainful smile upon his lips.

"Call M. le Comte de la Fère to me," said Madame de Chevreuse to the coadjutor. "I want to speak to him."

"And I," said the coadjutor, "want it to be believed that I never speak to him. I esteem and admire him, for I know his former adventures, at least some of them, but I do not wish to address him until day after to-morrow morning."

"And why day after to-morrow morning?" inquired Madame de Chevreuse.

"You will know that to-morrow evening," said the coadjutor, laughing.

"Really, my dear Gondy," said the Duchess, "you speak like the Apocalypse. M. d'Herblay," she added, turning toward Aramis, "will you this evening once more become my servant?"

"Why, certainly, Duchess," said Aramis; "this evening — to-morrow — forever! — command me."

"Well, then, go and get M. le Comte de la Fère for me. I wish to speak to him."

Aramis went to Athos, and returned with him.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the Duchess, giving Athos a letter, "here is what I promised you. Our protégé will be received most favourably."

"Madame," said Athos, "he is most fortunate in being indebted to you for anything."

"You have nothing for which to envy him in that respect, for I am indebted to you for having ever known him," said the sly creature, with a smile that reminded Aramis and Athos of Marie Michon.

And saying this, she arose and ordered her carriage.

Mademoiselle Paulet was already gone, and Mademoiselle Scudéry just going.

"Viscount," said Athos to Raoul, "follow Madame de Chevreuse, request her to do you the favour to take your hand to help her downstairs, and as you go, thank her."

La belle Indienne went to take leave of Scarron.

"Are you going so soon?" said he.

"I am one of the last, as you may perceive. If you hear any news of M. Voiture, particularly if it be good, do me the favour to send it to me to-morrow."

"Oh," said Scarron, "now he may die."

"And why so?" inquired the young lady with soft eyes.

"*Because* his panegyric has been made."

And they separated with smiles, the young girl turning
ıd looking with interest at the poor paralytic; and the poor
ıralytic following her with eyes of love.

Gradually the groups dispersed. Scarron pretended not to
e that certain of his guests had conversed mysteriously
gether, that letters had been brought to many persons, and
at the soirée appeared to have a mysterious purpose, far
moved from literature, about which they had, nevertheless,
ade such a great fuss. But what did it signify to Scarron?
nce the morning, as he had said, he was no longer the
ıeen's invalid.

As for Raoul, he had attended the Duchess to her carriage,
here she had taken her seat, giving him her hand to kiss.
hen, by one of those giddy caprices which made her so ado-
ble, and at the same time so dangerous, she had suddenly
ized him by the head, and kissed his forehead, saying:

"Viscount, may my good wishes and this kiss bring you
ıod fortune!"

Then she pushed him back, telling her coachman to drive
the Hôtel de Luynes. The carriage went off, Madame de
ıevreuse giving a farewell wave of the hand to the young
an, who returned to the salon in utter confusion.

Athos understood all that had passed, and smiled.

"Come, Viscount," said he, "it is time for you to retire.
›-morrow you depart for the army of M. le Prince. There-
re sleep well, on this your last night as a citizen."

"Then I am to be a soldier," said the young man. "Oh,
·, I thank you with all my heart!"

"Adieu, Count," said the Abbé d'Herblay, "I am going to
y monastery."

"Adieu, abbé," said the coadjutor; "I am to preach to-
ɔrrow, and I have twenty texts to consult this evening."

"Adieu, gentlemen," said the Count, "I am going to sleep
good four-and-twenty hours, for I am overwhelmed with
tigue."

The three men bowed and departed, after having exchanged
last look.

Scarron followed them, with a glance from the corner of
s eye, through the door of his salon.

"Not one of them will do what he has said," murmured he,
ith his apish smile. "But let them go: they are noble
ɛntlemen. Who knows but what they are now labouring to

make them give me back my pension? They can move their arms — that is a great thing. Alas! I have only my tongue; but I will endeavour to prove that that is something. Hallo! Champenois, it is now striking eleven; come and wheel me to my bed. Really that Mademoiselle d'Aubigné is a charming creature!"

Upon this the poor paralytic disappeared in his bed-chamber, the door of which closed behind him, and one by one the lights were extinguished in the salon of the Rue des Tournelles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAINT DENIS.

The day was beginning to dawn when Athos arose and dressed himself. It was very perceptible, by his unusual pallor, and by the traces which want of sleep leaves upon the countenance, that he had passed an almost sleepless night. Contrary to the habitual and peculiar firmness and decision of this man, there was this morning something slow and irresolute in his whole appearance.

The reason was that he was engaged in preparations for Raoul's departure, and was endeavouring to gain time. First, he himself furbished up a sword which he drew from a scabbard of perfumed leather, examined if the handle was well on guard and if the blade was firmly fixed to the handle.

Then he threw a small bag full of louis into the young man's valise, called Olivain (that was the name of the lacquey who had followed them from Blois), made him pack the portmanteau before him, seeing that everything necessary for a young man going on a campaign was placed within it. At last, having employed nearly an hour on all these cares, he opened the door of the Viscount's chamber, and softly entered it.

The sun, already radiant, penetrated into the apartment through the large window-panes, the shutters of which Raoul, having come in late, had forgotten to close. He was still sleeping, his head gracefully resting on his arm. His long black hair half concealed his charming forehead, covered with that moisture indicative of fatigue in youth.

Athos approached, and bending over him in an attitude full

of melancholy tenderness, for a long time looked at the youth, thus reposing with a smile on his lips, and half-closed lids. Indeed, his dreams ought to be soft and his slumber light, so much of silent solicitude and affection did his guardian angel express in his watchfulness. Athos allowed himself to be gradually carried away by the fascinations of his reverie, in the presence of youth so pure and exuberant. His own youth came back to him, bringing with it all those sweet recollections which are rather perfumes than thoughts. Between that past and the present there was an abyss. But imagination has the wing of an angel and of the lightning: she leaps across seas where we have almost met with shipwreck, across the darkness in which our illusions have vanished, and the precipices where our happiness has been shattered. He remembered that all the first part of his life had been destroyed by a woman; and he thought with terror what influence love might excite over an organization so delicate, and at the same time so vigorous.

By recalling all that he had himself suffered he foresaw all that Raoul might endure; and the expression of profound and tender pity that passed through his heart impressed itself on the tearful look with which he regarded the young man.

At this moment Raoul awoke, fresh, clear-headed, and invigorated; certain delicate organizations in this respect are like the birds. His eyes rested on Athos's, and doubtless he understood all that passed in the heart of that man, who thus awaited his waking as a lover awaits that of his mistress; for his look assumed an expression of intense affection.

"Have you been there long, sir?" said he respectfully.

"Yes, Raoul; I have been here some time," replied the Count.

"And you did not awake me?"

"I wished to leave you a few moments more of that excellent sleep, my dear. You must have been fatigued by our long day yesterday, for it was even prolonged to a late hour into the night."

"Oh, sir, how good you are!" exclaimed Raoul.

Athos smiled.

"How do you feel?" said he.

"Oh, perfectly well, sir; and thoroughly rested."

"You know that you are still growing," continued Athos, with the paternal and charming interest of the mature for the young man, "and so fatigue has a double effect at your age."

"Oh, sir," replied Raoul, quite ashamed of so much consid eration for him, "pardon me, and I will be dressed in a moment."

Athos called Olivain, and, in reality, in ten minutes, with that punctuality which Athos had acquired in his military service and transmitted to his pupil, the young man was ready.

"Now," said the youth to the lacquey, "employ yourself about my baggage."

"Your baggage is waiting for you, Raoul," said Athos; "I had the valise packed under my own inspection, and nothing is wanting. It must be already placed on your horse, and the lacquey's portmanteau on his, if my orders have been carried out."

"Everything has been done according to the Count's wishes," said Olivain, "and the horses are waiting."

"And I was asleep," exclaimed Raoul, "while you, sir, had the goodness to occupy yourself with all these details. Really, sir, you overwhelm me with your kindness."

"And so you love me a little? — at least I hope so," replied Athos in a tone of considerable emotion.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Raoul, who, that he might not betray his feelings by any outburst of weakness, was struggling with himself almost to suffocation, — "oh! God is my witness that I love and venerate you."

"Let us see that you forget nothing," said Athos, pretending to look around so as to conceal his emotion.

"Oh, no, sir," replied Raoul.

The lacquey then came up to Athos with some hesitation, and said to him in a low voice:

"Sir, the Viscount has no sword, for you made me take away the one which he wore last evening."

"Very well," replied Athos, "I will take care of that."

Raoul appeared not to notice this conversation. He went downstairs, looking every instant at the Count, to see if the farewell moment had come. But Athos did not move a muscle.

On reaching the steps Raoul saw three horses. "Oh, sir," said he overjoyed, "so you are going with me?"

"I wish to ride a little way with you," replied Athos.

Joy shone in Raoul's eyes as he threw himself lightly on his horse.

Athos mounted his slowly, after having said something in a

ow voice to the lacquey, who, instead of immediately follow-
ng, returned into the house. Raoul, enchanted at being in
he Count's company, either did not perceive, or pretended
ıot to perceive, anything of this.

The two gentlemen went by the Pont-Neuf, followed the
ıuays, or rather what was then called Pepin's watering-place,
ınd skirted along the walls of the Grand Châtelet. They
vere entering the Rue St. Denis when they were overtaken
›y the lacquey.

They proceeded in silence. Raoul realized that the time of
ıeparation was approaching. The Count had, the evening
›efore, given various directions with regard to his journey.
3esides, his looks redoubled in tenderness, and the few words
hat escaped him grew more and more affectionate. From
ime to time a reflection, or a piece of advice, dropped from
ıis lips, and his words were full of solicitude.

After having passed the Porte St. Denis, and when the two
ıavaliers had reached the heights of les Récollets, Athos cast
ıis eyes on the Viscount's horse.

"Take care, Raoul," said he, "you have too heavy a hand
›n your horse. I have often told you so. You must not for-
ıet it, for it is a great fault in a horseman. See, your horse
s already fatigued: he foams at the mouth; while mine ap-
›ears as if he were just come out of the stable. You harden
ıis mouth by thus always bearing on the bit. And observe
hat you cannot in this way make him manœuvre with the
ıecessary rapidity. The safety of a cavalier very often de-
›ends upon the prompt obedience of his horse. Remember
hat in a week hence you will no longer be manœuvring in
he riding-school, but on the field of battle."

Then suddenly, not to appear to give too grave an impor-
ance to this observation, Athos continued:

"Look, Raoul, what a fine plain for hawking partridges!"

The young man profited by the lesson, and more than all,
ıdmired the affectionate delicacy with which it was given.

"I also remarked one thing the other day," said Athos,
' that in shooting with the pistol you extended your arm too
nuch. This affects the correctness of your aim; therefore,
n twelve shots you missed the butt three times."

"While you hit every time, sir, replied Raoul, smiling.

"Because I bent my arm, and kept my hand supported by my
ılbow. Do you thoroughly understand what I mean, Raoul?"

"Yes, sir. I have shot alone since then; I followed your directions and was perfectly successful."

"Observe also," said Athos, "that in fencing you attack your adversary too much. I know very well that it is the fault of your age; but the motion of the body in attacking turns the sword from the direct line; and if you were engaged with a cool hand he would stop you at the first pass, either by a simple parry or a direct thrust."

"Yes, sir, as you have often done; but it is not every one that possesses your skill and courage."

"How sharp the wind is!" said Athos; "it reminds us of winter. By the way, if you get under fire, — and you will do so, for you are recommended to a young general who is very fond of the smell of powder, — remember that in a personal conflict, which often happens, particularly amongst us cavaliers, — remember well that you should never fire first; he who fires first seldom hits his man, for he fires with the dread of remaining unarmed before an armed enemy. Then, when he fires, make your horse rear. This manœuvre has saved my life two or three times."

"I will make use of it, were it only from gratitude."

"Ah!" said Athos, "are not those poachers who are being taken down there? Yes, they really are. . . . And then, a very important thing, Raoul: should you be wounded in a charge, and fall from your horse, if you have sufficient strength left, take yourself from the line followed by your regiment; otherwise it may be driven back, and you would be trodden under foot by the horses. At all events, should you be wounded, write to me immediately, or make some one write. We have some knowledge of wounds," he added, smiling.

"Thank you, sir!" exclaimed the young man, with great emotion.

"Ah! here we are at St. Denis," murmured Athos.

In fact, they had just reached the gate of the town, which was guarded by two sentinels. One of them said to the other:

"Ah! here is another young gentleman who appears to be going to join the army."

Athos turned round. Everything referring even indirectly to Raoul assumed an importance in his eyes.

"How can you tell that?" said he.

"By his air, sir," said the sentinel. "Besides, he is just the age. He is the second this morning."

"What! has another young man like myself passed through is morning?" asked Raoul.

"Yes, faith, he has, and of a haughty air, and with a hand- me equipment. He looked to me like the son of some high mily."

"He will be a companion for me on my journey, sir," re- ied Raoul, already spurring forward; "but, alas! he will not ake me forget what I lose."

"I do not think that you can overtake him, Raoul; for I .ve something to say to you here, and it may occupy sufficient ne to enable this gentleman to get a long way before you."

"As you please, sir."

Whilst thus conversing, they traversed the streets, which ere very full, on account of the service of the festival, and me opposite the old church, in which they were then saying first Mass.

"Let us dismount, Raoul," said Athos; "and you, Olivain, ke care of the horses and give me the sword."

Athos took the sword in his hand, and the two gentlemen tered the church.

Athos presented the holy water to Raoul. The hearts of me fathers are gifted with the same thoughtful affection nich a lover feels for his mistress.

The young man touched Athos's hand, bowed, and crossed mself.

Athos said something to one of the vergers, who bowed and nt toward the vaults.

"Come, Raoul," said Athos, "let us follow this man."

The verger opened the grated door of the Royal tombs, and nained at the top of the stairs, while Athos and Raoul de- ended them. The depths of this sepulchral staircase were hted by a silver lamp burning on the lowest step; and ex- tly underneath this lamp rested a coffin, supported on oak estles, covered by a large mantle of violet-coloured velvet, rinkled with golden fleur-de-lis.

The youth, prepared for such a scene by the state of his own art, then filled with sadness, and by the awful majesty of e church he had just passed through, had descended the airs with a slow and solemn step, and remained standing, th head uncovered, before the mortal remains of the last ing, who was not to rejoin his ancestors until his successor me to rejoin him, and who appeared to remain there merely

to say to human pride, so ready to boast when on a throne: "Earthly dust, I wait for thee!"

There was a moment's silence.

Then Athos raised his hand, and pointing to the coffin:

"This imperfect sepulture," said he, "is that of a man who was feeble and without grandeur, and who had yet a reign replete with extraordinary events. It was because the mind of another hovered over that King, as that lamp does over his coffin and illumines it. That other was the real King, Raoul; this was only a shadow into which he infused his soul. And yet, so powerful is the monarchical dignity with us, that that man has not even the honour of a tomb at the foot of him for whose glory he sacrificed his whole life. For that man, Raoul, — and remember this, — if he degraded the King, yet elevated Royalty; and there are two things enclosed in the walls of the Louvre — the King, who dies; and Royalty, which never dies. That reign has passed away, Raoul. The minister so redoubted, so much feared, and so much hated by his master, has descended to the tomb, drawing after him the King, whom he did not wish to leave alone, for fear, no doubt, lest he should destroy his work; for a King not sustained by God or the spirit of God is utterly valueless. But at that time every one looked on the Cardinal's death as a deliverance; and I myself, so blind are contemporaries, often openly opposed the designs of that great man, who held France within his grasp, and who, as he tightened or relaxed it, smothered her, or gave her air, at his will. If he did not crush me and my friends in his terrible wrath, it was doubtless that I might this day say: Raoul, learn to distinguish between the King and Royalty. The King is only a man; Royalty is the spirit of God. When you have any doubt whom you should serve, abandon the material appearance for the invisible principle. For the invisible principle is everything. Only God has willed to make this principle palpable, by embodying it in a man. Raoul, I fancy that I can discover your future as through a cloud. It is better than ours, I think. In direct opposition to us, who had a minister without a King, you will have a King without a minister. You may therefore serve, honour, and respect the King. Should this King become a tyrant — for unlimited power has its intoxication, which impels it on to tyranny — yet serve, love, and respect Royalty. That is, the infallible principle — that is, the spirit of God on earth — that is, that

heavenly spark which makes the dust so great and so sacred that we, gentlemen of high birth though we are, are as insignificant before that body stretched on the last step of this staircase as that body itself is before the throne of our Saviour."

"I will worship God, sir," said Raoul; "I will respect Royalty; I will serve the King; and I will endeavour, if I die, that it may be for the King, for Royalty, or for God. Have I rightly understood you?"

Athos smiled.

"You have a noble nature," said he. "Here is your sword."

Raoul bent his knee to the ground.

"It was borne by my father, a loyal gentleman. I afterward carried it; and I sometimes did it no discredit when its hilt was in my hand and its sheath was hanging by my side. If your hand is yet too weak to wield this sword, Raoul, so much the better: you will have more time to learn never to draw it but when it ought to see the light."

"Sir," said Raoul, as he received the sword from the Count's hand, "I owe everything to you; and yet this sword is the most precious gift that you ever made me. I will bear it, believe me, as a grateful man."

And he put his lips to the hilt, and he kissed it respectfully.

"It is well," said Athos. "Rise, Viscount, and let us embrace."

Raoul arose and threw himself, with an overflowing heart, into Athos's arms.

"Adieu!" murmured the Count, who felt his heart melting within him; "adieu, and think of me!"

"Oh, yes, forever, forever!" exclaimed the young man. "Oh, yes, I swear it, sir! and should any misfortune befall me, your name shall be the last that I will pronounce — my last thought shall be of you."

Athos mounted the steps hastily to conceal his emotion, gave a piece of gold to the verger, bowed to the altar, and with rapid steps gained the church porch, at the bottom of which Olivain was waiting with the horses.

"Olivain," said he, pointing to Raoul's belt, "tighten the buckle of that sword, which hangs too low. Very well. Now you will accompany the Viscount till Grimaud has joined him.

When that is the case, you will quit the Viscount. Do you understand, Raoul? Grimaud is an old servant, most courageous and prudent, — Grimaud will serve you."

"Yes, sir," said Raoul.

"Now to horse, that I may see you depart."

Raoul obeyed.

"Adieu, Raoul," said the Count; "adieu, my dear boy."

"Adieu, sir," said Raoul; "adieu, my most loved protector!"

Athos waved his hand, for he dared not speak; and Raoul departed with head uncovered.

Athos remained motionless, looking at his retreating figure until it disappeared round the corner of the street. Then he gave the bridle of his horse to a peasant, slowly remounted the steps, reëntered the church, went and knelt down in the darkest corner, and prayed.

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE OF M. DE BEAUFORT'S FORTY METHODS OF ESCAPE.

In the meanwhile time was passing for the prisoner, as well as for those engaged in effecting his escape, only it was passing with a slower current. Unlike some men, who eagerly undertake a perilous adventure, and grow cold as the moment of execution approaches, the Duc de Beaufort, whose boiling courage was proverbial, and who had been chained down to inaction for five years, — the Duc de Beaufort seemed to urge time forward, and to summon the moment for action with all his thoughts and all his aspirations. There was in his escape alone — apart from the future projects which he cherished — projects, it must be confessed, still rather vague and uncertain — a foretaste of vengeance which made his heart dilate. In the first place, his escape would be a sad blow upon M. de Chavigny, whom he hated for the petty persecutions he had inflicted on him; and then it would be worse still for Mazarin, whom he execrated on account of this. You see his sentiments were kept to proper proportions toward the governor and the minister, toward the underling and master.

Then M. de Beaufort, who had such a complete knowledge

of the interior of the Palais Royal, and was not ignorant of the connection between the Cardinal and the Queen, pictured to himself, even in his prison, the dramatic commotion which was about to be excited when the cry resounded, from the Cardinal's office to the Queen's chamber, "M. de Beaufort has escaped!" While saying all this to himself, M. de Beaufort smiled gently, and already fancied himself breathing the free air of the plains and the forests, grasping a vigorous horse between his legs, and exclaiming, with a loud voice, "I am free!"

It is true that, on waking from such day-dreams, he found himself between his four walls; saw La Ramée at ten paces' distance from him, twirling his thumbs as usual; and in the antechamber his eight guards, either laughing or drinking.

The only thing that refreshed him in this odious picture, so great is the instability of the human mind, was Grimaud's sour countenance — that countenance which he had first hated so much, and which had now become his only hope. Grimaud seemed to him an Antinoos.

It is unnecessary to say that all this was a play of the prisoner's excited imagination. Grimaud was still the same; he had, therefore, retained the confidence of La Ramée, his superior, who now would trust to him more willingly than to himself; for we have said that La Ramée felt at his heart a certain weak partiality for M. de Beaufort.

Therefore the good La Ramée made a sort of celebration of this little *tête-à-tête* supper with his prisonor. La Ramée had but one fault — he was a gourmand; he had found the pies good, the wine excellent. Now, Father Marteau's successor had promised him a pie of pheasant instead of chicken, and vin de Chambertin instead of vin de Mâcon. All this, set off by the presence of that excellent Prince, who was such a good fellow at heart, who invented such droll tricks against M. de Chavigny, and such capital jokes against Mazarin, caused the approaching Whitsuntide to be one of the four great festivals of the year to the worthy La Ramée.

La Ramée therefore longed for six o'clock in the evening as impatiently as the Duke.

Since the morning he had been engaged in all the preparations, and trusting to no one but himself, had paid a visit to Father Marteau's successor. He had even surpassed himself: he showed him a regular monster of a pie, adorned on the top with M. de Beaufort's arms. The pie was as yet empty,

but by its sidewas a pheasant and two partridges, so finely larded that each one looked like a pincushion. La Ramée's mouth had watered, and he came back to the Duke's apartment rubbing his hands.

To complete his happiness, M. de Chavigny, having, as we have said, entire confidence in La Ramée, was gone on a short journey. He had set out that very morning, and this at once constituted La Ramée the deputy-governor of the château.

Grimaud appeared more surly than ever.

In the morning M. de Beaufort had played at ball with La Ramée. A sign from Grimaud had made him comprehend that he was to pay attention to everything.

Grimaud, walking in front, traced the road they were to follow in the evening. The game was in what was called the enclosure of the little court of the château. It was a very solitary spot, where sentinels were not placed except when M. de Beaufort was playing, and, from the height of the wall, even this precaution seemed superfluous.

There were three doors to open before reaching this enclosure. Each was opened with a different key, which keys La Ramée carried.

On reaching the enclosure Grimaud seated himself mechanically near a loop-hole, with his legs hanging outside the wall. It was evident, therefore, that the rope ladder was to be suspended from this place.

All this whole manœuvre, well understood by the Duc de Beaufort, was, of course, quite unintelligible to La Ramée.

The game began. This time M. de Beaufort was in good form, and sent the balls wherever he liked. La Ramée was completely beaten.

Four of M. de Beaufort's guards had followed him, and picked up the balls. When the game was finished, the Duke, while laughing at La Ramée for his bad play, offered the guards two louis to go and drink his health with their comrades.

The guards asked La Ramée's permission, and he granted it, but not until the evening. Up to the very time, La Ramée had to attend to important preparations; and as he had to go out he wished that they should not lose sight of the prisoner during his absence.

Had M. de Beaufort arranged everything himself, he probably would not have managed it so completely to his satisfaction and convenience as his jailer had done.

At last it struck six. Although they were not to sit down till seven, everything was served and ready. On a sideboard was the gigantic pie, with the Duke's arms, and appearing to be cooked to perfection, as far as could be judged from the golden colour illuminating its crust.

The rest of the dinner was in keeping.

All were impatient — the guards to go and drink, La Ramée to get to eating, and M. de Beaufort to escape.

Grimaud alone was unmoved. It might have been imagined that Athos had trained him in anticipation of this great occasion.

There were moments when M. de Beaufort, looking at him, asked himself whether it were not a dream, and whether this marble figure were really at his command, and would become animate at the critical moment.

La Ramée dismissed the guards, with orders to drink the Prince's health. Then, when they were gone, he shut the doors, put the keys in his pocket, and pointed to the table in a manner that signified: "When monseigneur shall please."

The Prince looked at Grimaud; Grimaud looked at the clock: it was scarcely a quarter past six; the escape was fixed for seven o'clock. So there was more than three-quarters of an hour to wait.

The Prince, to gain a quarter of an hour, pretended to want to finish a chapter he was reading, and which greatly interested him. La Ramée went up to him and looked over his shoulder to see what book could have such extraordinary influence over the Prince as to prevent his sitting down when dinner was served. It was "Cæsar's Commentaries," which he himself had procured for him three days before, contrary to M. de Chavigny's orders.

La Ramée made a secret resolve never again to contravene the prison rules.

In the meantime he uncorked the bottles, and took a smell at the pie.

At half-past six the Duke arose, and said, with the utmost gravity,

"Cæsar was decidedly the greatest man of ancient times."

"Do you think so, monseigneur?" said La Ramée.

"Yes."

"Well, now, I prefer Hannibal," replied La Ramée.

"And why so, Master la Ramée?" inquired the Duke.

"Because he did not leave any Commentaries," said La Ramée, with his coarse laugh.

The Duke understood the hint, and placed himself at table, making a sign for La Ramée to take the opposite seat.

The officer did not require a repetition of the invitation.

There is no countenance more expressive than that of a genuine gourmand who finds himself at a good table. Therefore, on receiving his plate of soup from Grimaud, La Ramée's face bore an expression of most perfect felicity.

The Duke looked at him with a smile.

"Ventre-Saint gris, La Ramée!" he exclaimed; "do you know that if any one were to tell me that there is, at this moment, a man in France happier than you are, I would not believe him?"

"And, faith, you would be right, monseigneur!" answerd La Ramée. "I confess that when I am hungry I know of nothing more agreeable to see than a well-spread table. And if you add," continued La Ramée, "that he who does the honours at this table is the grandson of Henry the Great, then you will understand, monseigneur, that the honour received doubles the pleasure I experience."

The Prince bowed in turn, and an imperceptible smile appeared on Grimaud's countenance, as he stood behind La Ramée.

"My dear La Ramèe," said the Duke, "no one can turn a compliment like yourself."

"Nay, monseigneur," said La Ramée, in the exuberance of his feelings, — "nay, I say what I actually think; there is nothing complimentary in my words."

"Then you are really attached to me?" asked the Duke.

"I can only say that I should be inconsolable if your Highness were to leave Vincennes," replied La Ramée.

"A droll manner of testifying your *affliction* for me."

The Prince meant to say "affection."

"But, monseigneur," said La Ramée, "what would you do if you were out? Some folly that would embroil you with the Court, and get you into the Bastille, instead of being at Vincennes. M. de Chavigny is not an amiable man, I confess," continued La Ramée, sipping a glass of Madeira, "but M. de Tremblay is much worse."

"Really?" said the Duke, who was greatly amused at the turn the conversation was taking, and who kept looking from

time to time at the clock, the minute-hand of which appeared to be desperately lazy in its motions.

"But what could you expect from the brother of a Capucin brought up at the school of the Cardinal de Richelieu? Ah, monseigneur! believe me that it is a most fortunate thing that the Queen, who, as I heard say, has always wished you well, thought of sending you here, where there is a promenade, a tennis-court, a good table, good air."

"Really, La Ramée, to hear you," said the Duke, "I must be an ungrateful fellow ever to have thought of leaving the place."

"Oh, monseigneur, it is the height of ingratitude!" replied La Ramée; "but your Highness never can have seriously thought of it."

"Yes, I have," replied the Duke; "and I must confess, it may perhaps be foolish. I do not say that it is not so; but from time to time I think of it, even now."

"And always by one of your forty methods, monseigneur?"

"Why, yes," replied the Duke.

"Monseigneur, as we are opening our hearts," said La Ramée, "tell me one of those forty methods which your Highness has invented."

"Most willingly," said the Duke. "Grimaud, give me the pie."

"I am listening," said La Ramée, throwing himself back in his easy-chair, raising his glass, and, with one eye shut, looking at the sun through the ruby-coloured liquid it contained.

The Duke cast a glance at the clock: it wanted only ten minutes to seven.

Grimaud placed the pie before the Duke, who took his knife with the silver blade to remove the covering; but La Ramée, who feared that some misfortune might happen to this beautiful fabric, handed him his own knife, which had an iron blade.

"Thank you, La Ramée," said the Duke, taking the knife.

"Well, monseigneur," said the officer, "now for your famous method."

"Must I tell you," replied the Duke, "that upon which I depended the most — that which I had resolved to employ at the first?"

"Oh, yes! that one," said La Ramée.

"Well, then," said the Duke, digging into the pie with one hand and describing a circle with his knife with the other, "in

the first place I hoped to have such an excellent fellow as you are, Monsieur La Ramée, for my jailer."

"Good!" said La Ramée; "you have him, monseigneur. And what then?"

"And I congratulate myself upon it."

La Ramée bowed.

"I said to myself," continued the Prince, "if ever I have near me a good fellow like La Ramée, I shall try to have recommended to him, by some friend of mine with whom he knows not that I am connected, a man completely devoted to me, with whom I may devise means of escape."

"Come, come," said La Ramée, "that is not a bad idea."

"No, it is not, is it?" replied the Duke. "For instance, the servant of some worthy gentleman, himself an enemy to Mazarin, as every gentleman ought to be."

"Hush, monsiegneur! let us not talk politics."

"When I have this man near me," continued the Duke, "if he is clever and wins my jailer's confidence, trust will be reposed in him, and then I shall have news from without."

"Ah, yes," said La Ramée, "but how can you get news from without?"

"Oh, nothing easier," replied the Duc de Beaufort; "in playing tennis, for example."

"In playing tennis?" said La Ramée, beginning to pay the most intense attention to the Duke's words.

"Yes. Observe now: I send a ball into the moat; a man is there who picks it up; the ball contains a letter; instead of throwing me back the ball I asked for from the top of the rampart, he sends me back another; this other ball contains a letter; thus we have exchanged our ideas, and no one knows anything about it."

"The devil! the devil!" said La Ramée, scratching his ear; "you do well to tell me this, monseigneur. I will look to these ball-pickers."

The Duke smiled.

"But," continued La Ramée, "all this, after all, is only a means of correspondence."

"But that is a good deal, I think," replied the Duke.

"But not enough," said La Ramée.

"I beg your pardon. For example, I say to my friends: 'On such a day, at such an hour, you must be on the other *side of* the moat with two saddle horses.'"

"Well, and what then?" said La Ramée, with some uneasiness; "unless, indeed, these horses have wings, so as to mount the rampart and come for you."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" said the Duke carelessly, "there is no necessity that the horses should have wings to mount the rampart, but merely that I myself should have some means of descending it."

"What?"

"A rope ladder."

"Yes," said La Ramée, trying to laugh, "but a rope ladder cannot be conveyed in a tennis-ball, like a letter."

"No; but it may be sent in something else."

"In something else — in something else? In what?"

"In a pie, for example."

"In a pie?" exclaimed La Ramée.

"Yes. Let us suppose one thing," replied the Duke; "let us suppose, for instance, that my house-steward, Noirmont, had bought Father Marteau's shop" —

"Well," said La Ramée, shuddering.

"Well, La Ramée, who is a gourmand, sees his pies, finds that they have a better appearance than those of his predecessor, and comes and offers to let me taste them. I agree to it on condition that La Ramée tastes them with me. To be more completely at his ease, La Ramée dismisses the guards and keeps only Grimaud to wait upon us. Grimaud is the man sent me by my friend — the servant with whom I secretly plot, and who is ready to second me in everything. The moment for my escape is fixed at seven o'clock. Well, at a few minutes before seven" —

"At a few minutes before seven?" gasped La Ramée, from whose forehead the perspiration began to trickle.

"At a few minutes before seven," continued the Duke, suiting the action to the words, "I take off the crust from the pie, and in it I find two daggers, a rope ladder, and a gag. I clap one of these daggers to La Ramée's breast, and I say to him: 'My friend, I am inexpressibly sorry for it, but if you move, or say one word, you are a dead man!'"

We have said that on pronouncing these last words the Duke suited the action to them. The Duke was standing near him, and was holding the point of the dagger to his breast, in a manner that left no doubt of his intentions.

In the meantime Grimaud, as silent as ever, drew the

second dagger, the rope ladder, and the choke-pear from the pie.

La Ramée perceived each of these objects with looks of increased terror.

"Oh, monseigneur!" he exclaimed, looking at the Duke in such utter stupefaction as at any other time would have made him roar with laughter, "you will not have the heart to kill me!"

"Not unless you oppose my flight."

"But, monseigneur, if I let you escape, I am a ruined man."

"I will make you compensation for the loss of your position."

"And you are really determined to leave the château?"

"Pardieu!"

"Nothing that I can say will make you change your resolution?"

"This evening I must be free."

"And if I resist — if I call, or cry out?"

"On the word of a gentleman, I will kill you."

At this moment the clock struck.

"Seven o'clock!" said Grimaud, who had not yet spoken a word.

"Seven o'clock," repeated the Duke; "you see that I am late."

La Ramée made a motion as if to satisfy his conscience.

The Duke frowned, and the officer felt the point of the dagger, which, after having penetrated his dress, was just going to pierce his breast.

"Well, monseigneur," said he, "that is quite sufficient; I will not stir."

"Let us make haste," said the Duke.

"A last favour, monseigneur?"

"What is it? Speak — be quick!"

"Bind me, monseigneur."

"And why?"

"That I may not be considered your accomplice."

"Your hands!" said Grimaud to him.

"Not before — behind me, behind."

"But with what?" said the Duke.

"With your girdle, monseigneur," replied La Ramée.

The Duke took off his belt and gave it to Grimaud, who bound his hands in a most satisfactory manner.

"Your feet!" said Grimaud.

La Ramée stretched out his legs: Grimaud took a napkin, tore it into strips, and bound La Ramée.

"Now my sword," said La Ramée,—"tie up the hilt of my sword."

The Duke tore off one of the ribands from his breeches, and performed his jailer's wish.

"Now," said poor La Ramée, "I want the choke-pear; without that they will call me to account for not having cried out. Put it in deep, monseigneur, — stuff it in!"

Grimaud set to work to obey the officer's directions, but he made a sign that he had something more to say.

"Speak," said the Duke.

"Now, monseigneur," continued La Ramée, "should any misfortune befall me on your account, do not forget that I have a wife and four children."

"Make yourself perfectly easy. Stuff it in, Grimaud!"

In a second La Ramée was gagged and laid on the ground, and two or three chairs were overturned, as if there had been a struggle. Grimaud then took all the keys from the officer's pocket, first opened the door of the room where they were, and double-locked it when they had gone out; then they hastily went through the gallery leading to the little enclosure; the three doors were successively opened and shut with a promptitude that did great honour to Grimaud's skill. At last they reached the tennis-court; it was quite deserted — no sentinel, no one at the windows.

The Duke ran to the rampart and saw three horsemen on the other side of the moat, with two led horses. He exchanged a sign with them; they were waiting for him.

In the meantime Grimaud was fastening the rope that was to give them liberty. It was not a rope ladder, but a clew of silk on a stick, which was to pass through the legs, and unwind itself by the weight of him who was straddled on it.

"Go!" said the Duke.

"The first, monseigneur?" inquired Grimaud.

"Certainly," said the Duke. "If I am caught, I run only the risk of imprisonment; if you are caught, you will be hanged."

"That 's true," said Grimaud.

And immediately setting himself astride on the stick, he

began his perilous descent. The Duke followed him with involuntary fear. He had already accomplished three-fourths of his descent when the cord suddenly broke. Grimaud fell head-first into the moat.

The Duke called out, but Grimaud uttered no complaint; and yet he must have been seriously hurt, for he remained motionless on the spot where he had fallen.

Instantly one of the men who was waiting slipped down into the moat and fastened a rope to Grimaud's shoulders; the two others, who held the other end of the rope, drew him up to them.

"Come down, monseigneur," said the man in the trench; "there are not more than fifteen feet to fall, and the grass is soft."

The Duke had already commenced operations. His performance was more difficult, for he had no stick to support him. He was, therefore, obliged to descend by the strength of his hands, and that from a height of fifty feet. But as we have said, he was active, vigorous, and cool; in less than five minutes he found himself at the end of the cord. As the gentleman had told him, he was now not more than fifteen feet from the earth; he therefore let go his hold, and fell on his feet without hurting himself.

He then mounted the shelving bank of the moat, on the summit of which he found Rochefort. The other gentlemen were unknown to him. Grimaud, still insensible, was fastened to a horse.

"Gentlemen," said the Duke, "I will thank you hereafter, but at present we have not a moment to lose. Forward, then, forward! He who loves me follows me."

And he threw himself on his horse, and set off at full gallop, eagerly inhaling every breeze, and crying out, with an expression of joy quite impossible to describe:

"Free! — Free! — Free!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

D'ARTAGNAN ARRIVES JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME.

D'ARTAGNAN received at Blois the sum that Mazarin, from his anxiety to see him again as soon as possible, had persuaded himself to give him for his future services.

From Blois to Paris was a four days' journey for an ordinary horseman. D'Artagnan reached the barrier of St. Denis about four o'clock in the afternoon of the third day. Formerly he would have only taken two days; and we have already seen that Athos, having left home three hours later, had arrived four-and-twenty hours before.

Planchet was out of the habit of these forced journeys, and D'Artagnan reproached him for his effeminacy.

"Well, sir," replied he, "forty leagues in three days is, I think, pretty good for a burnt-almond seller."

"And you really are become a shopkeeper, Planchet? And do you seriously intend, now that we have met again, to vegetate in your shop?"

"Sir," answered Planchet, "you alone are formed for a life of activity. Look at M. Athos. Who would say that he was the famous knight-errant that we knew of old? He now lives like a regular gentleman farmer, or a true lord of the soil. Depend upon it, sir, there is nothing so desirable as a tranquil existence."

"Hypocrite!" said D'Artagnan; "it is plain enough that you are drawing near Paris, and that in Paris a cord and a gallows await you."

In fact, at this point of the conversation the two travellers reached the barrier. Planchet drew his hat over his eyes, considering that he was going to pass through some streets where he was well known, and D'Artagnan raised his mustache, on thinking of Porthos, who must be expecting him in the Rue Tiquetonne. He thought of the means of making him forget his lordship of De Bracieux and the Homeric kitchens of Pierrefonds.

On turning the corner of the Rue Montmartre, he discovered Porthos at one of the windows of the Hôtel de la Chevrette, in a splendid coat of celestial blue, embroidered with silver, and yawning so as almost to dislocate his jaw; so that the passers-

by contemplated with respectful admiration that gentleman so rich and handsome who appeared to be wearied of his wealth and his grandeur.

Scarcely had D'Artagnan and Planchet turned the corner of the street, when Porthos saw them.

"Ah, D'Artagnan," he exclaimed. "Praised be God, it is you!"

"Ah! how are you, my dear friend?" inquired D'Artagnan.

A small knot of idlers soon formed round the horses and the stable-boys who held them, and the cavaliers who were talking in such an important way; but a frown from D'Artagnan, and a threatening gesture from Planchet, well understood by them, dispersed the crowd, which was becoming more numerous precisely because it did not know why it had collected.

Porthos had already come down to the door.

"Ah, my dear friend," said he, "how badly off my horses are here!"

"Indeed!" said D'Artagnan. "I am sincerely grieved for those noble animals."

"And I myself also," said Porthos, "was badly off too; and had it not been for the hostess," continued he, swaying on his legs, with his grand air of self-satisfaction, "who is handsome enough, and understands a joke, I must inevitably have looked for lodgings somewhere else."

The fair Madeline, who had drawn near during this dialogue, stepped back and turned pale as death on hearing Porthos's words, for she expected a second edition of the Swiss scene; but, to her great astonishment, D'Artagnan did not even frown, and instead of being angry, he said to Porthos, laughing:

"Yes, I comprehend, my dear friend. The air of the Rue Tiquetonne is not equal to that of the valley of Pierrefonds. But never mind; I will soon take you where it is better."

"And when?"

"Faith, very shortly, I hope!"

"Ah, so much the better!"

This exclamation of Porthos was followed by a low and lengthened groan issuing from a corner behind the door. D'Artagnan, who had just dismounted, then saw Mousqueton's enormous paunch outlined against the wall; from his lugubrious throat those doleful plaints had been emitted.

"*And* you also, my poor Mouston, you are out of your ele

ient in this miserable hôtel, — is it not so ? " asked D'Artanan, in that bantering tone which, perhaps, had in it as much ompassion as mockery.

" He finds the cooking detestable," said Porthos.

" Why, then, does he not take it into his own hands, as at hantilly ? " said D'Artagnan.

" Ah, sir ! " said Mouston, " I have not here, as I had there, ie Prince's stews, where I took the large carp, and his Highess's forests, where I caught the fine partridges in nets. As or the cellar, I have thoroughly examined it, and really it is ut a poor concern."

" M. Mouston," said D'Artagnan, " I should really pity you I had not just now something of more pressing importance attend to."

Then taking Porthos aside :

" My dear Du Vallon," said he, " here you are already ressed ; and it is fortunate, for I am going to take you immeiately to the Cardinal."

" Really ? " said Porthos, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

" Yes, my friend."

" An introduction ? "

" Does that frighten you ? "

" No ; but it causes me some emotion."

" Oh, never mind. You have not to appear before the other ardinal, and this one will not crush you by the weight of his ignity."

" Nevertheless, you understand, D'Artagnan, — the Court ! "

" Ah, but, my friend, there is no longer a Court."

" The Queen ! "

" I was near saying there is no longer a Queen. The Queen ? luck up your courage, we shall not see her."

" And do you say that we are going immediately to the alais Royal ? "

" Immediately. Only, to prevent delay, I will borrow one f your horses."

" They are all four at your service."

" Oh, I only want one for the present."

" Shall we not take our servants with us ? "

" Yes, take Mousqueton ; he may be useful. As for Planchet, e has his reasons for not going to Court."

" And why ? "

"Oh, he is on bad terms with his Eminence."

"Mouston," said Porthos, "saddle Vulcan and Bayard."

"And shall I take Rustaud, sir?"

"No, take a show-horse — take Phœbus or Superb. We are going on a visit of ceremony."

"Ah!" said Mousqueton, breathing freely again, "we are only going to pay a visit, then?"

"Oh, yes, Mouston," said D'Artagnan, "nothing else. Only, to be prepared, put pistols into the holsters. You will find mine loaded at my saddle."

Mouston sighed. He did not thoroughly understand these visits of ceremony, which they made armed to the teeth.

"Really," said Porthos, looking complacently at his retiring valet, "you are right, D'Artagnan. Mouston will do; he makes a very handsome appearance."

D'Artagnan smiled.

"And you," continued Porthos, — "are you not going to change your dress?"

"No, I remain as I am."

"But you are entirely covered with perspiration and dust, and your boots are dreadfully splashed."

"This careless travelling costume will testify my eagerness to obey the Cardinal's injunctions."

At this moment Mousqueton returned, with the three horses fully equipped. D'Artagnan mounted as if he had just been taking a week's rest.

"Oh," said he to Planchet, "my long sword" —

"I," said Porthos, pointing to a slight dress sword with a golden hilt, "I have my Court sword."

"Take your rapier, my friend."

"And why?"

"I do not know — but at any rate take it."

"My rapier, Mouston," cried Porthos.

"But this is a regular war equipment, sir!" said he. "Are we going on a campaign? Tell it me at once, and I will take my precautions accordingly."

"With us, Mouston," replied D'Artagnan, "you know very well it is always right to take precaution. Either you have a very bad memory or you have forgotten that we were not accustomed to pass our nights at balls and serenades."

"Alas! that is true," said Mousqueton, as he armed *himself from* top to toe; "but I had forgotten it."

They set off at a good pace, and reached the Palais Cardinal at about a quarter past seven. There was a considerable crowd in the streets, for it was Whitsunday; and this crowd gazed with astonishment at the two cavaliers, one of whom was so fresh that he looked as if he had just come out of a bandbox, while the other was as completely covered with dust as if he had just left a battlefield.

Mousqueton also attracted the observation of the curious idlers; and as the romance of "Don Quixote" was then much in vogue, some said that it was Sancho, who, having lost one master, had found two.

On reaching the antechamber, D'Artagnan found himself in a well-known country. The Musketeers of his own company were on guard. He ordered the groom of the chamber to be called, to whom he showed the Cardinal's letter, enjoining him to return without a second's delay. The groom of the chamber bowed, and went to his Eminence's apartment.

D'Artagnan turned toward Porthos, and thought he saw a slight degree of agitation. He smiled, and putting his mouth to his ear:

"Courage, my worthy friend," said he. "Do not be nervous. Believe me, the eagle's eye is closed, and we are now dealing with a mere vulture. Keep yourself stiff and unbending, as on the day of the bastion of St. Gervais, and do not bow too low to this Italian; it would give him a mean opinion of you."

"Very well, very well," answered Porthos.

The groom of the chamber reappeared.

"Enter, gentlemen," said he; "his Eminence is waiting for you."

Mazarin was seated in his cabinet, endeavouring to erase as many names as possible from the pension and benefice list. From the corner of his eye he saw D'Artagnan and Porthos enter; and although, on first hearing them announced by the groom of the chamber, his eyes had sparkled with delight, he externally betrayed no emotion.

"Ah! it is you, is it, lieutenant?" said he. "You have been expeditious; that 's well. You are welcome."

"Thanks, monsignor. Here I am at your Eminence's commands, as also is M. du Vallon, one of my old friends, who concealed his rank under the name of Porthos."

Porthos bowed to the Cardinal.

"A superb cavalier," said Mazarin.

Porthos turned his head right and left and moved his shoulders in a manner full of dignity.

"The best sword in the realm, monsignor," said D'Artagnan; "and many know it who do not say so, and who, indeed, cannot say so."

Porthos bowed to D'Artagnan.

Mazarin loved handsome soldiers almost as much as Frederick of Prussia loved them in after-times. He began to admire the sinewy hands, broad shoulders, and determined look of Porthos. He fancied that he saw before him the safety of his ministry and of the realm, cut out of flesh and bone. This recalled to his memory that the old association of the Musketeers consisted of four persons.

"And your two other friends?" demanded Mazarin.

Porthos opened his mouth, thinking it a good opportunity for putting in a word in his turn. D'Artagnan gave him a sign from the corner of his eye.

"Our other friends," said he, "are at present prevented. They will join us later."

Mazarin coughed slightly.

"And this gentleman, — more at liberty than they are, — is he willing to reënter the service?" demanded Mazarin.

"Yes, monsignor, and that from pure devotion; for M. de Bracieux is rich."

"Rich?" said Mazarin, in whom this single word always had the power of inspiring great consideration.

"Fifty thousand livres' income," said Porthos.

This was the first word he had spoken.

"Out of pure devotion," replied Mazarin, with his sly smile, — "out of pure devotion?"

"Perhaps monsignor does not believe in that expression?" suggested D'Artagnan.

"And you yourself, Sir Gascon?" said Mazarin, resting his elbows on his desk and his chin on both his hands.

"I?" said D'Artagnan; "I have as much faith in devotion as in a baptismal name, which, of course, ought naturally to be followed by a surname. A man is certainly more or less devoted; but it is always necessary that there should be something at the end of devotion."

"And your friend, for instance, — what crowning object would he wish to have at the end of his devotion?"

"Well, monsignor, my friend has three magnificent estates — that of Du Vallon, at Corbeil; that of De Bracieux, in the Soissonnais; and that of Pierrefonds, in the Valois. Now, monsignor, he desires to have one of these estates erected into a barony."

"Is that all?" demanded Mazarin, whose eyes sparkled with joy on perceiving that he could reward Porthos's devotion without opening his purse. "Is that all? The thing can be managed."

"I shall be a baron!" murmured Porthos, making one step forward.

"I told you so," said D'Artagnan, keeping him back with his hand; "and monsignor reiterates my assurance."

"And you, M. d'Artagnan, — what do you want?"

"Monsignor, next September it will be twenty years since Cardinal Richelieu made me a lieutenant."

"Yes; and you would like Cardinal Mazarin to make you a captain."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"Well, all this is not an impossibility; we shall see, gentlemen, we shall see. Now, M. du Vallon," said Mazarin, "what kind of service do you prefer? That of the city or of the country?"

Porthos opened his mouth to reply.

"Monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "M. du Vallon is like myself, he prefers extraordinary service; that is to say, such enterprises as are deemed mad and impossible."

This gasconade did not displease Mazarin, who began to think.

"And yet I will confess to you that I sent for you to give you a sedentary post. I have certain anxieties. But what is the matter now?" cried Mazarin.

In fact, a great noise was heard in the antechamber, and almost at the same time the door of the cabinet was thrown open, and a man, covered with dust, rushed into the room, exclaiming,

"The Cardinal! Where is the Cardinal?"

Mazarin thought that it was an attempt at assassination, and drew back, putting himself behind his easy-chair. D'Artagnan and Porthos threw themselves between the Cardinal and the intruder.

"Ah, sir," said Mazarin, "what is the matter, that you come in here as if it were the market-place?"

"Monsignor," said the officer whom he thus reproached, "two words with you. I wish to speak to you immediately and alone. I am M. de Poins, an officer of the Guards, on duty at the prison of Vincennes."

The officer was so pale and agitated that Mazarin, convinced that he was the bearer of some important intelligence, made a sign to D'Artagnan and Porthos to give way to him. They therefore retired into a corner of the apartment.

"Speak, sir, — speak quickly!" cried Mazarin; "what is the matter?"

"The matter is," said the messenger, "that M. de Beaufort has just escaped from the Château of Vincennes."

Mazarin uttered an exclamation, and became as pale as the man who had given him this information. He fell back into his chair as if he had been thunderstruck.

"Escaped!" cried he; "M. de Beaufort escaped!"

"Monsignor, I saw him in full flight, from the summit of the terrace."

"And why did you not fire down on him?"

"He was out of range."

"But M. de Chavigny — what was he doing?"

"He was absent."

"And La Ramée?"

"He was found bound in the prisoner's room, a gag in his mouth and a dagger by his side."

"And that man whom he had engaged?"

"He was the Duke's accomplice, and escaped with him."

Mazarin groaned.

"Monsignor," said D'Artagnan, advancing one step toward the Cardinal.

"What?" said Mazarin.

"It seems to me that your Eminence is losing precious time."

"How so?"

"If your Eminence were to order the prisoner pursued, perhaps he might even yet be overtaken. France is extensive and the nearest frontier is sixty leagues off."

"And who would pursue him?" cried Mazarin.

"I, pardieu!"

"And would you arrest him?"

"Why not?"

"You would arrest the Duc de Beaufort, armed, in the *field?*"

"If monsignor were to command me to arrest the devil himself I would lay hold of him by the horns and bring him to you."

"And so would I," said Porthos.

"And you would also!" said Mazarin, looking at the two men with astonishment. "But the Duke will not yield without a desperate resistance."

"Well," said D'Artagnan, his eyes flashing, "battle! It is a long time since we have fought, is it not, Porthos?"

"Battle!" said Porthos.

"And you think that you can overtake him?"

"Yes, if we are better mounted than he is."

"Then take what Guards you may find here and pursue him."

"And do you give the order, monsignor?"

"I set my name to it," said Mazarin, taking some paper and writing a few lines.

"Add, monsignor, that we may take all the horses that we may meet on the road."

"Yes, yes," said Mazarin, "the King's service! Take it and be off!"

"Good, monsignor."

"Monsieur du Vallon, your barony is on the Duc de Beaufort's crupper; all you have to do is to catch him. As for you, my dear M. d'Artagnan, I promise you nothing; but if you bring him back, dead or alive, you may ask for what you like."

"To horse, Porthos!" said D'Artagnan, taking his friend's hand.

"Here I am," answered Porthos, with his sublime imperturbability.

And they went down the grand staircase, taking with them the Guards they met, and crying, "To horse! — To horse!"

About ten men were collected.

D'Artagnan and Porthos leaped, the one on Vulcan, the other on Bayard; Mousqueton bestrode Phœbus.

"Follow me," cried D'Artagnan.

"Forward!" cried Porthos.

And digging the spurs into the flanks of their noble steeds, they set off by the Rue St. Honoré like a furious tempest.

"Well, Monsieur le Baron," said D'Artagnan, "I promised you some exercise, and you see that I keep my word."

"Yes, my captain," replied Porthos.

They looked round: Mousqueton, sweating more than his horse, kept the proper distance; behind him galloped the ten Guards.

The astonished citizens looked out of their doors, and the frightened dogs barked after them.

At the corner of the churchyard of St. Jean D'Artagnan upset a man; but this was an affair of too little consequence to stop men in such a hurry. The troop therefore galloped on, as if the horses were winged.

Alas! there are no trivial circumstances in this world; and we shall see that this circumstance very nearly caused the downfall of the monarchy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HIGH ROAD.

They went at the same pace through all the Faubourg St. Antoine and the road to Vincennes; they were therefore soon out of the city, soon in the forest, soon in sight of the village.

The horses became more excited at every step, and their nostrils grew as red as a heated furnace. D'Artagnan, with his spurs in his horse's sides, preceded Porthos rather more than two feet; Mousqueton followed at two lengths; the Guards came behind, distanced progressively according to the quality of their horses.

From the top of an eminence D'Artagnan perceived a group of people collected on the other side of the moat, opposite that part of the prison which looks toward St. Maur. He at once conjectured that this was the point from which the prisoner had escaped, and that he might gain some intelligence here. In five minutes he had reached the place, where the Guards successively came up with him.

All those who composed this assemblage were earnestly engaged: they were looking at the cord, still hanging from the loop-hole; it was broken at about twenty feet from the ground. Their eyes were measuring the height, and they were exchanging sundry conjectures. On the top of the rampart the sentinels were pacing to and fro with an affrighted air.

A detachment of troops, commanded by a sergeant, was

driving away citizens from the place where the Duke had mounted his horse.

D'Artagnan rode straight up to the sergeant.

"Officer," said the sergeant, "no one must stop here."

"That order does not apply to me," replied D'Artagnan. "Have the fugitives been followed?"

"Yes, sir; unfortunately they are well mounted."

"And how many are they?"

"Four efficient men, and a fifth, whom they carried off wounded."

"Four!" said D'Artagnan, looking at Porthos; "do you hear, Baron? — there are only four of them."

A joyous smile illumined Porthos's face.

"And what length of start have they got?"

"Two hours and a quarter, sir."

"Two hours and a quarter. It is nothing; we are well mounted, are we not, Porthos?"

Porthos heaved a sigh; he was thinking of what his poor horses had before them.

"Very well," said D'Artagnan. "And now in what direction are they gone?"

"I am forbidden to tell, sir."

D'Artagnan drew a paper from his pocket.

"Order from the King," said he.

"Then speak to the Governor."

"And where is the Governor?"

"In the country."

Rage showed itself in D'Artagnan's face; he scowled; the red colour spread to his temples.

"Wretch!" said he to the sergeant, "I believe that you are mocking me. Look!"

He unfolded the paper, held it out to the sergeant with one hand and with the other he took from his holster a pistol, which he cocked.

"An order from the King, I tell you! Read it and answer it or I blow out your brains! What road did they take?"

The sergeant saw that D'Artagnan was in earnest.

"The Vendômois road," he replied.

"And by what gate did they go out?"

"By the gate of St. Maur."

"If you have deceived me, wretch," cried D'Artagnan, "you shall be hanged to-morrow."

"And if you overtake them you will not return to get me hanged," muttered the sergeant.

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders, made a sign to his escort, and spurred forward.

"This way, this way, gentlemen," said he, going toward the Park gate that had been indicated.

But now that the Duke had escaped the porter had judged it advisable to double-lock the gate most carefully. It was therefore necessary to compel him to open it in the same manner as the sergeant had been compelled; and thus ten minutes more were lost.

This last obstacle being surmounted the troop resumed its course with the same rapidity. But not all the horses dashed on with the same ardour. Some of them could not long keep up such a desperate pace. Three gave in at the end of an hour; one fell down.

D'Artagnan, who never turned his head, did not even perceive it. Porthos told him of it in his usual quiet way.

"Let only us two reach them," said D'Artagnan; "it is all that is necessary since there are only four of them."

"That is true," answered Porthos.

And he set his spurs into his horse.

At the end of two hours the horses had gone twelve leagues without stopping. Their legs began to tremble, and the foam flowing from their mouths sprinkled the doublets of the cavaliers, while the sweat saturated their breeches.

"Let us rest a moment to breathe these unhappy animals," cried Porthos.

"Kill them, on the contrary, — kill them," replied D'Artagnan; "only let us reach them. I see fresh tracks; it is not a quarter of an hour since they passed here."

In fact, the road was cut up by horses' feet, and the tracks could be seen by the last gleams of daylight.

Again they set off; but at the end of two leagues, Mousqueton's horse fell.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "there is Phœbus done for."

"The Cardinal will pay you a thousand pistoles for him."

"Oh," said Porthos, "I am above that."

"Off again, then," cried D'Artagnan, "and at a gallop!"

"Yes, if we can."

In fact, D'Artagnan's horse refused to stir another step; he

had no longer any breath, and a last prick of the spur, instead of making him go on, only made him fall.

"Ah, the devil!" cried Porthos, "there is Vulcan done up too."

"Mortdieu!" cried D'Artagnan, tearing his hair, "we *must* stop, then! Give me your horse, Porthos. Well! what the devil are you about now?"

"Ah, pardieu!" answered Porthos, "I am falling, or rather Bayard is."

D'Artagnan wished to raise him, whilst Porthos freed himself from his stirrups as well as he could; but the blood was flowing from his nostrils.

"There goes the third," cried he; "well, now, all is up with us!"

At this moment the neighing of a horse was heard.

"Hark!" said D'Artagnan.

"What is that?"

"I hear a horse!"

"It is one of our comrades who is coming up with us."

"No," said D'Artagnan, "it is in front."

"Then it must be something else," said Porthos.

And he listened in turn, turning his ear in the direction which D'Artagnan had indicated.

"Sir," said Mousqueton,— who, after having left his horse on the high road, had just regained his master on foot, — "sir, Phœbus could not struggle on any longer, and" —

"Silence!" cried Porthos.

In fact, at this very moment a second neigh was heard, borne on the evening breeze.

"It is about five hundred paces in front of us," said D'Artagnan.

"Sir," said Mousqueton, "at about five hundred paces in front of us there is a small hunting-lodge."

"Mousqueton — your pistols!" said D'Artagnan.

"I have them in my hand," replied Mousqueton.

"Porthos, take yours from your holsters."

"I have them."

"Very good," said D'Artagnan, taking his own. "Now, Porthos, do you understand?"

"Not very well."

"We are on the King's service."

"Very well!"

"For the King's service we require these horses."

"That is so," said Porthos.

"Therefore, not one word, but to work."

All three advanced through the darkness as silent as ghosts. At a turn of the road they saw a light shining in the midst of the trees.

"There is the house," said D'Artagnan, in a low voice. "Let me take the command, Porthos, and do as I do."

They glided from tree to tree and came within twenty paces of the house without being discovered. From that spot they could see, by means of a lantern suspended from a shed, four handsome-looking horses. A servant was cleaning them, and close by were the saddles and bridles.

D'Artagnan went up briskly, making a sign to his companions to keep some paces in the rear.

"I will buy these horses of you," said he to the servant.

The man turned, mightily astonished, but made no reply.

"Did you not hear, you rascal?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes," he replied.

"And why do you not answer?"

"Because these horses are not for sale."

"Then I will take them," said D'Artagnan. And he put his hand on the one nearest to him. His two companions made their appearance at the same moment, and did the same.

"But, gentlemen," exclaimed the valet, "they have just travelled six leagues, and have been unsaddled scarcely half an hour."

"Half an hour's rest is sufficient," said D'Artagnan; "they will only be in better wind for it."

The groom called for help. A kind of steward came out, just as D'Artagnan and his companions were putting the saddles on the horses' backs. The steward was going to shout.

"My good friend," said D'Artagnan, "if you say one word, I blow your brains out."

And he showed him the barrel of a pistol, which he instantly placed under his arm, that he might continue his operations.

"But, sir," said the steward, "do you know that these horses belong to M. de Montbazon?"

"So much the better," answered D'Artagnan, "they must be good animals."

"Sir," said the steward, retreating step by step, and en-

deavouring to regain the door, "I warn you that I shall call my people."

"And I mine!" replied D'Artagnan. "I am a lieutenant of the King's Musketeers. I have ten Guards following me, and — there, do you not hear them galloping? We shall soon see."

Nothing was to be heard, but the steward feared that he should hear.

"Are you ready, Porthos?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"I have finished."

"And you, Mouston?"

"And I also."

"Then to horse and off!"

All three threw themselves on their horses.

"Help!" cried the steward. "Here, you lacqueys, bring your carbines."

"Forward!" said D'Artagnan; "we shall have a volley."

And all three set off like the wind.

"Help! help!" bawled the steward, while the groom ran toward the neighbouring building.

"Take care you don't kill your own horses!" called out D'Artagnan, roaring with laughter.

"Fire!" cried the steward.

A flash like a gleam of lightning illumined the road, and, along with the report, the three horsemen heard the whistling of the bullets, which were lost in the air.

"They shoot like lacqueys," said Porthos. "There was better shooting in the times of Richelieu. Do you remember the Crevecœur road, Mousqueton?"

"Ah, sir! my right buttock even now pains me."

"Are you sure that we are on the track, D'Artagnan?" asked Porthos.

"Pardieu! did you not hear?"

"What?"

"That these horses belonged to M. de Montbazon."

"Well?"

"Well, M. de Montbazon is Madame de Montbazon's husband."

"And what then?"

"Madame de Montbazon is the Duc de Beaufort's mistress."

"Ah, I comprehend!" said Porthos; "she had placed the relays."

"Exactly so."

"And we are pursuing the Duke with the horses that he has just left."

"My dear Porthos, you have decidedly a most superior intellect," said D'Artagnan, in a manner half in jest, half in earnest.

"Pooh!" said Porthos, "I am what God made me."

Thus they went on for about an hour. The horses were white with foam, and the blood was dropping from their flanks.

"Hi! what did I see down there?" said D'Artagnan.

"You are mighty lucky if you can see anything in such a night as this," replied Porthos.

"Sparks," said D'Artagnan.

"And I saw them too," said Mousqueton.

"Aha! can we have overtaken them?" cried Porthos.

"Good — a dead horse," said D'Artagnan, pulling his horse up from a violent start; "it seems they also are at the end of their wind."

"I fancy I hear a troop of horsemen," said Porthos, bending down over his horse's mane.

"Impossible!"

"They are numerous."

"Then it must be something else."

"Another horse!" said Porthos.

"Dead?"

"No — dying."

"Saddled or unsaddled?"

"Saddled."

"Then it must be they."

"Courage! we have them."

"But if they are numerous," said Mousqueton, "it is not we who have them, but they who have us."

"Bah!" said D'Artagnan, "as we pursue them, they will think us stronger than we are, so they will take fright and disperse."

"That is certain," said Porthos.

"Ah! — do you see?" cried D'Artagnan.

"Yes, more sparks; this time *I* saw them," replied Porthos.

"Forward! forward!" cried D'Artagnan, with his ringing voice, "and in five minutes we shall laugh."

And they dashed forward once more. The horses, mad with

pain and emulation, flew over the black road, in the middle of which they began to descry a mass denser and darker than the rest of the horizon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

They went on in this manner for ten minutes more.

Suddenly two dark spots separated themselves from the mass, came forward, grew larger, and, as they increased in size, assumed the form of two horsemen.

"Oho!" said D'Artagnan, "they are coming to meet us."

"So much the worse for those who come," replied Porthos.

"Who goes there?" cried a hoarse voice.

The three advancing horsemen neither stopped nor replied; the only sound heard was that of swords leaving scabbards, and the click of pistols cocked by the two dark phantoms.

"Bridle in your mouth!" cried D'Artagnan.

Porthos understood; and each drew a pistol from his holster with his left hand and cocked it.

"Who goes there?" demanded the same voice a second time; "not one step farther, or you are dead men!"

"Bah!" cried Porthos, almost choked with the dust, and chewing his bridle as a horse chews his bit; "bah! you are not the first persons we have ever encountered."

At these words the two shadows barred their passage, and the barrels of two levelled pistols glittered in the starlight.

"Back!" cried D'Artagnan, "or you are dead men."

Two pistol-shots answered this threat; but the two assailants dashed forward with such rapidity that they were on their adversaries in an instant. The report of a third pistol-shot was heard, fired by D'Artagnan at close range, and his enemy fell. Porthos dashed against his adversary with such violence that, although his sword-thrust was parried, the man was flung by the shock ten paces from his horse.

"Finish him, Mousqueton; finish him!" said Porthos. And he dashed forward and overtook his friend, who had already renewed the pursuit.

"Well?" said Porthos.

"I broke his head," said D'Artagnan. "And you?"

"I only upset him. But listen" —

They heard the report of a carbine; it was Mousqueton, who, in passing, had executed his master's order.

"Come along," said D'Artagnan, "that's all right; we have gained the first point in the game."

"Aha!" said Porthos, "here come some fresh players."

In fact, two more horsemen, detached from the principal group, now made their appearance, and came forward rapidly, again to bar their road.

This time D'Artagnan did not even wait to be addressed. "Give way!" he cried; "give way!"

"What do you want?" demanded a voice.

"The Duke!" roared out D'Artagnan and Porthos at the same moment.

A burst of laughter was the reply; but it terminated in a groan: D'Artagnan had run the laugher completely through the body.

At the same time there were two nearly simultaneous reports: it was Porthos and his adversary, who had fired at each other.

D'Artagnan turned, and saw Porthos close to him.

"Bravo, Porthos!" said he, "I think you have killed him."

"I fancy that I only shot his horse," answered Porthos.

"What would you have, my dear fellow? One does not hit the bull's-eye every time, and ought not to complain when the shot reaches the target. Hé! Hé! Parbleu! what is the matter with my horse?"

"Why, he is tumbling down, to be sure," replied Porthos, as he pulled up his own.

In fact, D'Artagnan's horse stumbled forward, and fell on his knees; then, after the death-rattle, lay motionless. He had received in his chest the bullet of D'Artagnan's first opponent.

D'Artagnan uttered a tremendous oath.

"Do you want a horse, sir?" inquired Mousqueton.

"Pardieu, that's a pretty question!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"Here is one, sir," said Mousqueton.

"How the devil did you come by these two led horses?" demanded D'Artagnan, at the same time leaping on one of them.

"Their masters are dead. I thought they might be useful to us, so I took them."

In the meantime, Porthos had reloaded his pistol.

"Look out!" said D'Artagnan; "here are two more."

"Aha! why, there will be enough to last till to-morrow!" said Porthos.

In reality, two more horsemen were rapidly advancing.

"Oh, sir!" said Mousqueton, "the man you knocked over is up again."

"Why did not you treat him as you did the other?"

"My hands were full, sir, holding the horses."

A shot was heard, and Mousqueton emitted a cry of pain.

"Ah, sir!" he cried out, "in the other! — precisely in the other! This wound will be an exact counterpart of that on the Amiens road."

Porthos turned like a lion, and rushed upon the dismounted horseman, who endeavoured to draw his sword; but before it could get out of its scabbard, Porthos gave him such a terrible blow on the head with the hilt of his own that he fell like an ox under the butcher's axe.

Mousqueton, groaning, gently glided from his horse, his wound not allowing him to keep the saddle.

When he saw the horsemen, D'Artagnan halted, and reloaded his pistol. His new horse had also a carbine at the saddlebow.

"Here I am!" said Porthos; "shall we wait, or charge them?"

"Charge!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Charge!" responded Porthos.

They struck their spurs into their horses' sides. The horsemen were not more than twenty paces from them.

"In the King's name let us pass!" cried D'Artagnan.

"The King has nothing to do here!" replied a deep-sounding voice that seemed to issue from a cloud, for the horseman was enveloped in a whirlwind of dust.

"Very well, we shall see if the King cannot pass everywhere!" answered D'Artagnan.

"See, then!" said the same voice.

Two pistol-shots resounded almost at the same moment, one from D'Artagnan, the other from Porthos's adversary. D'Artagnan's ball carried off his adversary's hat; the ball of Porthos's opponent penetrated his horse's neck, which fell dead with a heavy groan.

"For the last time, where are you going?" cried the same voice.

"To the devil!" replied D'Artagnan.

"Good! — make yourself easy — you will soon get there."

D'Artagnan saw a musket barrel levelled at him. He had no time to draw another pistol; he remembered the advice which Athos had formerly given him: he made his horse rear.

The ball struck the animal full in the belly. D'Artagnan felt that the animal was failing him, and, with his wonderful agility, threw himself off on one side.

"Aha!" said the same ringing and bantering voice, "it is verily a butchery of horses, and not a combat between men, in which we are engaged. To the sword, sir, to the sword!"

And he leaped from his horse.

"To the sword? So be it!" replied D'Artagnan; "that is just what I like."

In two bounds D'Artagnan was engaged with his adversary, whose sword he felt against his own. D'Artagnan, with his accustomed skill, had brought his sword *en tierce*, his favourite guard.

In the meantime, Porthos, kneeling behind his horse, which was struggling in the last convulsions, held a pistol in each hand.

Now the combat was on between D'Artagnan and his adversary. D'Artagnan had attacked fiercely, in his usual way; but this time he met a skill and a wrist play that made him wonder. Twice being received *en quarte*, he retreated one step; but his adversary did not move. So D'Artagnan returned, and again engaged his sword *en tierce*.

Two or three thrusts were exchanged without any result; the sparks flew in clusters from their swords.

At last D'Artagnan thought that the time was come to make use of his favourite feint. He performed it most skilfully, executed it with the rapidity of lightning, and made the lunge with a force that he considered irresistible. The thrust was parried.

"Mordious" he cried out in his Gascon accent.

At this exclamation his adversary jumped backward, and bending his uncovered head, endeavoured to discover D'Artagnan's countenance amid the darkness.

As for D'Artagnan, fearing a stratagem, he kept himself on his guard.

"Take care!" said Porthos to his adversary, "I have yet *got two loaded* pistols."

"The more reason that you should fire first," replied the other.

Porthos fired. A gleam illumined the field of battle.

At this light the two combatants each uttered a cry.

"Athos!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"D'Artagnan!" cried Athos.

Athos raised his sword. D'Artagnan lowered his.

"Aramis," cried out Athos, "do not fire!"

"Ah! is it you, Aramis?" said Porthos, throwing away his other pistol.

Aramis replaced his in his holster and sheathed his sword.

"My son!" said Athos, holding out his hand to D'Artagnan. It was the name he gave him formerly, in his moments of affection.

"Athos," said D'Artagnan, wringing his hands; "you are defending him, then? And I, who had sworn to bring him back, dead or alive — Ah! I am dishonoured!"

"Kill me," said Athos, baring his breast, "if your honour requires my death."

"Oh! misery, misery!" exclaimed D'Artagnan; "there was only one man in the world who could stop me, and Fate decrees that that man should bar my passage. Ah! what shall I say to the Cardinal?"

"You will tell him, sir," said a voice that dominated the field of combat, "that he sent against me the only two men who could thus have vanquished four, and who could contend on terms of equality with the Comte de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay, and who did not surrender till they were surrounded by fifty men."

"The Prince!" exclaimed Athos and Aramis, at the same moment retiring, so as to discover the Duc de Beaufort; while D'Artagnan and Porthos retreated a step.

"Look around you, gentlemen, if you do not believe me."

"Fifty cavaliers!" muttered D'Artagnan and Porthos.

They looked around them, and found that they were completely surrounded by horsemen.

"By the noise of your combat, gentlemen," said the Duke, "I thought that there were twenty men of you, and I returned with all my attendants, weary of flight, and wishing, in my turn, to draw my sword, — when I found that there were but two of you."

"Yes, monseigneur," said Athos, "but you yourself said that they were two who were worth twenty."

"Come, gentlemen, your swords!" said the Duke.

"Our swords?" cried D'Artagnan, raising his head and recovering himself, — "our swords? Never!"

"Never!" reëchoed Porthos.

Some of the men made a movement.

"One moment, monseigneur," said Athos; "only two words."

And he went up to the Prince, to whom, as he bent down toward him, he spoke a few words in a low voice.

"As you please, Count," said the Prince; "I am under too great obligations to you to refuse your first request. Retire, gentlemen," said he to his escort. "Messieurs D'Artagnan and Du Vallon, you are free!"

The order was immediately executed, and D'Artagnan and Porthos found themselves composing the centre of an immense circle.

"Now, D'Herblay," said Athos, "dismount and come here."

Aramis dismounted and went up to Porthos, while Athos approached D'Artagnan. Thus the four were again united.

"Friends," said Athos, "are you sorry that you have not shed our blood?"

"No," replied D'Artagnan. "What I regret is to see us opposed to one another — we who have always been so closely united. I regret that we should meet in opposite camps. Ah! nothing will succeed with us again."

"Oh, no!" ejaculated Porthos, "mon Dieu! all is over with us!"

"Well, then, join us," said Aramis.

"Silence, D'Herblay!" said Athos. "Propositions of this kind are not to be made to such gentlemen as these. If they have taken service with Mazarin, it is from conscientious conviction, just as we have joined the Prince."

"In the meantime we are enemies," said Porthos. "Sang-bleu! who would ever have believed that?"

D'Artagnan said nothing, but sighed.

Athos looked at them, and took their hands.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this is a grave affair, and my heart suffers as much as if you had pierced it through. Yes, we are separated — this is the great, this is the sad reality. But we have not yet declared war. Perhaps we have some conditions to make. A last conversation is indispensable."

"I demand it," said Aramis.

"*I agree to it*," said D'Artagnan proudly.

Porthos bowed his head in token of assent.

"Let us, then, appoint a place of meeting," continued Athos, "accessible to all; and in a final interview, let us regulate definitively our mutual position, and the conduct we are to pursue toward one another."

"Very good," said the other three.

"You agree with me, then?" demanded Athos.

"Entirely."

"Well, then, the place?"

"The Place Royale — will that suit you?" said D'Artagnan.

"In Paris?"

"Yes."

Athos and Aramis looked at each other. Aramis gave a nod of assent.

"Let it be the Place Royale, then," said Athos.

"And when?"

"To-morrow evening, if you like."

"Shall you be back?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"At ten o'clock at night. Does that suit you?"

"Excellently well."

"From that interview," said Athos, "either war or peace will ensue; but, at any rate, my friends, our honour will be safe."

"Alas!" murmured D'Artagnan, "our honour, as soldiers, is gone!"

"D'Artagnan," said Athos, with great seriousness, "I protest that you give me excruciating pain by thinking so; and when I also remember that we have crossed swords in hostile conflict. Yes," continued he, shaking his head with profound grief, — "yes, you have said it: misfortune has invaded us. Come, Aramis."

"And we, Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "let us return and carry our shame to the Cardinal."

"And tell him, more especially," cried a voice, "that I am not too old to be a man of action."

D'Artagnan recognized Rochefort's voice.

"Can I do anything for you, gentlemen?" inquired the Prince.

"Give your testimony to our having done all we could, monseigneur."

"Make yourselves easy on that score; it shall be done. Adieu, gentlemen. I hope that we shall soon meet near Paris, and perhaps in Paris, and then you may take your revenge."

At these words the Duke waved his hand, put his horse to a gallop, and disappeared, followed by his escort, which was soon lost to sight in the darkness, as the noise was in the distance.

D'Artagnan and Porthos found themselves alone on the high road, with a man who was holding two horses by their bridles. They thought that it was Mousqueton, and went up to him.

"What do I see?" said D'Artagnan; "is it you, Grimaud?"

"Grimaud!" said Porthos.

Grimaud made a sign that the two friends were not mistaken.

"And whose horses are these?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Who has given them to us?" inquired Porthos.

"The Comte de la Fère."

"Athos, Athos," murmured D'Artagnan, "you think of everything; you are indeed a gentleman."

"All right!" said Porthos. "I was afraid that we should have had to trudge it on foot."

And he got into the saddle; D'Artagnan was already mounted.

"And where are you going, Grimaud?" inquired D'Artagnan; "are you leaving your master?"

"Yes, sir," answered Grimaud; "I am going to join the Viscomte de Bragelonne, with the army in Flanders."

They then proceeded some paces in silence, on the high road toward Paris, when, suddenly, lamentations were heard, apparently issuing from a ditch.

"What is that?" said D'Artagnan.

"That?" said Porthos; "why, it is Mousqueton."

"Oh, yes, sir, it is me," answered a plaintive voice, while a kind of shadow arose on the opposite side of the road.

Porthos hastened to his steward, to whom he was sincerely attached.

"Are you dangerously wounded, my dear Mouston?" said he.

"Mouston!" exclaimed Grimaud, opening his eyes with *astonishment.*

"No, sir, I do not think I am; but I am wounded in a most nconvenient manner."

"Then you cannot mount your horse?"

"Oh, sir, what a proposition to make me!"

"Can you walk?"

"I will try, as far as the next house."

"What can we do?" said D'Artagnan, "for we must return o Paris."

"I will take charge of Mousqueton," said Grimaud.

"Thank you, my good Grimaud," said Porthos.

Grimaud dismounted and gave his arm to his old friend, vho received it with tears in his eyes; but Grimaud was nable positively to determine whether they flowed from lelight at seeing him or from the pain of his wound.

D'Artagnan and Porthos silently pursued their journey to 'aris.

Three hours after, they were passed by a courier covered vith dust. It was a man sent by the Duke, as the bearer of a etter to the Cardinal, in which, according to his promise, he ore testimony to the actions performed by D'Artagnan and 'orthos.

Mazarin had passed a very bad night, when he received this etter, in which the Prince himself proclaimed his liberty and leclared deadly war against him.

The Cardinal read it two or three times; then folding nd putting it into his pocket: "What gives me some con- olation," said he, "is that in the pursuit he has at least nnihilated Broussel. Positively the Gascon is a most valu- ble man; he does me good service, even when he makes awk- ard blunders."

The Cardinal alluded to the man whom D'Artagnan had nocked over at the corner of the cemetery of St. Jean, in 'aris, and who was no other than the Councillor Broussel.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOUR OLD FRIENDS PREPARE FOR A MEETING.

"Well," said Porthos, who was seated in the court-yard of the Hôtel de la Chevrette, to D'Artagnan, who had just returned from the Palais Cardinal with a lengthened and dissatisfied face, — "well, did he receive you so ill, my good D'Artagnan?"

"Faith! yes. Positively that man is an ugly beast! What are you eating, Porthos?"

"Why, you see, I am soaking biscuit in a glass of Spanish wine. You had better do the same."

"You are quite right. Here, Gimblou, a glass!"

The waiter apostrophized by this euphonious name brought the glass, and D'Artagnan sat down by his friend.

"Well, how did it go?"

"Why, you understand, there was only one way of telling the thing. I entered, and he looked askance at me. I shrugged my shoulders and said to him:

"'Well, monsignor, we were not the stronger party.'

"'Yes, I know that,' said he, 'but give me the details.'

"You understand, Porthos, that I could not give him the details without mentioning our friends; and to name them was to destroy them."

"Yes, pardieu!"

"'Monsignor,' said I, 'there were fifty of them, and we were but two.'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'but that did not prevent some pistol-shots from being exchanged, as I have heard.'

"'The fact is,' said I, 'there were a few charges of powder burnt on both sides.'

"'And the swords saw the light of day, did they not?' he added.

"'That is to say, the light of night, monsignor,' I replied.

"'Ah, so. I thought you were a Gascon, my dear,' continued the Cardinal.

"'I am Gascon only when I succeed, monsignor,' said I.

"The answer pleased him, for he began to laugh.

"'This will teach me,' said he, 'to give better horses to my *Guards, for if they* had been able to follow you, and if they

each had done as much as you and your friend, you would have kept your word, and would have brought him back, dead or alive.' "

"Well, now, that does not seem bad after all," said Porthos.

"Oh, mon Dieu! no, my dear; but it is the manner in which it was said. It is incredible," broke off D'Artagnan, "what a quantity of wine these biscuits hold; they are regular sponges. Gimblou, another bottle!"

The bottle was brought with a promptitude that proved the consideration in which D'Artagnan was held by the establishment. He went on to say:

"So I was just going away when he recalled me.

"'You had three horses either killed or foundered?' he asked.

"'Yes, monsignor.'

"'How much were they worth?'"

"But," said Porthos, "that seems a pretty good motion, though."

"'A thousand pistoles,' I replied."

"A thousand pistoles?" said Porthos. "Oh, ho! that is a large sum; and if he knew anything of horses, he must have haggled a little."

"He had a good mind to do so, the skinflint; for he gave a tremendous start and looked at me. I looked at him. Then he understood; and, putting his hand into a desk, he drew forth some bills on the Lyons Bank."

"For a thousand pistoles?"

"Yes, for a thousand pistoles exactly, the stingy fellow, — not one more."

"And have you got them?"

"Here they are."

"Faith! now, I think that he has acted with great propriety," said Porthos.

"Propriety! With men who have not only just risked their lives, but who, moreover, have done him a great service!"

"A great service? And what is it?" demanded Porthos.

"Why, it seems that I almost annihilated a parliamentary councillor for him."

"What, that little dark man whom you upset at the corner of the cemetery of St. Jean?"

"Exactly so, my dear. Well, he annoyed him; and, unfor-

tunately, I did not squeeze him quite flat; it seems that he is likely to recover, and to annoy him again."

"There, now," said Porthos; "and I turned my horse to one side, else he would have been right on him! But I will do it another time."

"He ought to have paid me for the councillor, the mean fellow!"

"But if he was not quite crushed?" said Porthos.

"Ah! Richelieu would have said — 'five hundred crowns for the councillor!' But let us not talk any more about it. How much did those horses cost you, Porthos?"

"Ah, my friend, if poor Mousqueton were here he would tell you to a livre, a sou, and a denier!"

"Never mind; tell me within ten crowns."

"Why, Vulcan and Bayard stood me in about two hundred pistoles each; and putting Phœbus at a hundred and fifty, I believe that we shall come pretty near the mark."

"Then there remain four hundred and fifty pistoles," said D'Artagnan, very well satisfied.

"Yes," said Porthos, "but there are the accoutrements."

"That 's true, pardieu! And what do you put the accoutrements at?"

"Why, say a hundred pistoles for the three."

"Let it be a hundred pistoles," said D'Artagnan; "there then remain three hundred and fifty pistoles."

Porthos nodded an assent.

"Let us give the odd fifty to our hostess for all our expenses here," said D'Artagnan, "and divide the other three hundred."

"Let us divide them," said Porthos.

"A paltry affair!" muttered D'Artagnan, putting up the notes.

"Heu!" said Porthos, "it is always the case. But please tell me" —

"What?"

"Did he not mention me in any way?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, who was afraid of discouraging his friend by saying that the Cardinal had not breathed a syllable about him; "he said" —

"He said," repeated Porthos.

"Stay — I am trying to recall his very words. He said, 'Tell your friend that he may sleep on both ears.'"

"Good!" said Porthos; "that means, plain enough, that he still intends to make me a baron."

At this moment the neighbouring church clock struck nine. D'Artagnan started.

"Ah! it is true," said Porthos, "it is striking nine; and at ten, you remember, we have our appointment at the Place Royale."

"Hold your tongue, Porthos!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, with a gesture of impatience; "do not remind me of that; it has made me sulky ever since yesterday. I will not go."

"And why not?" demanded Porthos.

"Because it is most painful to me to meet again the two men who caused our enterprise to fail."

"And yet," replied Porthos, "neither one nor the other had the advantage. I had still one loaded pistol; and you were facing each other, sword in hand."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "but if this appointment conceals something" —

"Oh!" said Porthos, "you cannot think so, D'Artagnan."

It was true, D'Artagnan did not think Athos capable of employing stratagem, but he was trying to invent some pretext for not going to the rendezvous.

"We must go," said the proud Seigneur de Bracieux; "otherwise they will think that we were afraid. Ah! my dear friend, we faced fifty enemies on the high road — we may therefore well face two friends on the Place Royale."

"Yes, yes," said D'Artagnan, "I know that; but they took the Prince's side without giving us any intimation of it. Athos and Aramis have played a game with me which alarms me. Yesterday we discovered the truth; and what can be the use of going to-day to learn something else?"

"Then you really distrust them?" said Porthos.

"I certainly distrust Aramis since he has become an abbé. You cannot imagine, my dear, what he has become. He sees us standing in the way by which he might become a bishop, and probably would not be sorry to suppress us."

"Ah! as regards Aramis, it is another thing," said Porthos, "and I should not be surprised at it."

"M. de Beaufort might perhaps endeavour to have us arrested."

"Bah! Why, he had us in his power and let us go. Besides, let us be on our guard; let us arm ourselves and take Planchet, with his carbine."

"Planchet is a Frondeur," said D'Artagnan.

"The devil take these civil wars!" said Porthos; "one can no longer depend either on his friends or on his lacqueys. Ah, if poor Mousqueton were here! There is a fellow who will never forsake me."

"Yes, while you are rich. It is not the civil war, my dear, that disunites us; it is that we are no longer only twenty years old — it is that the pure and loyal zeal of youth has passed away, and has been followed by the suggestions of interest, the breath of ambition, and the counsels of selfishness. Yes, you are right, Porthos; let us go, but let us go well armed. If we were not to go, they would say that we were afraid."

"Holà, Planchet!" cried D'Artagnan.

Planchet made his appearance.

"Get the horses saddled, and take your carbine."

"But first, sir, tell me against whom we are going?"

"We are not going against any one," said D'Artagnan; "it is a simple measure of precaution, in case we should be attacked."

"Do you know, sir, that an attempt has been made on the life of the good Councillor Broussel, the father of the people?"

"Ah, really!" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, but he has been well avenged; for he was carried home in the arms of the people; since yesterday his house has never been empty. He has been visited by the coadjutor, the Duc de Longueville, and the Prince de Conti. Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Vendôme have left their names at his house; and now, when he likes" —

"Well? When he likes" —

Planchet began to sing:

"'*Un vent de fronde*
S'est levé ce matin;
Je crois qu'il gronde
Contre le Mazarin.
Un vent de fronde
S'est levé ce matin.'"[1]

"I do not wonder now," said D'Artagnan in a low voice to Porthos, "that Mazarin would have been more pleased had I completely crushed that councillor."

[1] "A breeze of the Fronde
Arose this morning;
I believe that it groaned
Against Mazarin.
A breeze of the Fronde
Arose this morning."

"You understand, therefore, sir," said Planchet, "that if it were for such an expedition as that against M. Broussel you wished me to take my carbine" —

"No, no; be quite easy about that. But who told you all these details?"

"Who? I have them from good authority, sir; I got them from Friquet."

"From Friquet?" said D'Artagnan; "I know that name."

"He is the son of M. de Broussel's servant-maid — a rogue who, I answer for it, would not, in any disturbance, give his share to the dogs."

"Is he not choir boy at Notre Dame?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that 's the one — a protégé of Bazin's."

"Ah, I know," said D'Artagnan; "and also the waiter at a wine-shop in the Rue de Calandre?"

"Exactly so."

"What can you have to do with this monkey?" said Porthos.

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "he gave me some good information, and may possibly, on occasion, give me more."

"To you, who were very near annihilating his master?"

"And who should tell him that?"

"Ah, that is true!"

At this very time, Athos and Aramis were entering Paris by the Faubourg St. Antoine. They had taken refreshment on their route, and were hurrying forward that they might not be too late for their appointment. Bazin alone accompanied them. Grimaud, it may be remembered, had remained to take care of Mousqueton, and was to go directly to the young Viscomte de Bragelonne, who was on his way to join the army in Flanders.

"Now," said Athos, "we must enter some hotel to put on a peaceful garb, to lay aside our pistols and swords, and to disarm our lacquey."

"Oh, by no means, my dear Count! and in this you will not only allow me to be of a different opinion, but also to endeavour to bring you over to mine."

"And why so?"

"Because we are going to a hostile meeting."

"What do you mean, Aramis?"

"That the Place Royale is the sequel of the Vendômois road, and nothing else."

"What, our friends" —

"Are become our most dangerous enemies. Athos, believe me we must be on our guard; and especially you must.

"Oh, my dear D'Herblay!"

"Who can say that D'Artagnan has not thrown the blame of his defeat on us, and that he has not given information to the Cardinal? Who can say that the Cardinal will not take advantage of this appointment to arrest us?"

"What, Aramis, do you think that D'Artagnan and Porthos would sanction such an infamous proceeding?"

"Between friends, my dear Athos, you are perfectly right — it would be disgraceful; but between enemies it is only a stratagem."

Athos crossed his arms, and his handsome head fell on his chest.

"What would you have, Athos?" said Aramis; "men are thus constituted, and are not forever twenty years old. We have, as you know, cruelly wounded that self-love which blindly actuates D'Artagnan in everything he does. He has been foiled. Did you not hear his despair on the road? As for Porthos, perhaps his barony depended on the success of that expedition. Well, he met us on the road, and will not be a baron this time. Who can say but that this famous barony has something to do with our interview of this evening? Let us take our precautions, Athos."

"But if they were to come unarmed, what a disgrace for us, Aramis!"

"Oh, be quite easy, my dear. I answer for it that that will not be the case. Besides, we have an excuse. We are just come from a journey, and we are rebels."

"An excuse for us — we must devise an excuse to give D'Artagnan and Porthos! Oh, Aramis, Aramis!" continued Athos, with a melancholy shake of the head, "by my soul, you make me the most wretched of men! You disenchant a heart not yet dead to friendship! Hear me, Aramis; I protest I would prefer that you tore open my breast. Do you go as you like, Aramis. I will go unarmed."

"No; because I will not allow you to go so. It is not merely one man — it is no longer Athos — it is not even the Comte de la Fère that you will betray by such a weakness, but it is the entire party to which you belong, and which counts on you."

"Well, let it be as you will," said Athos, in a mournful tone.

And they pursued their route.

Scarcely had they reached the gates of the deserted place, by the Rue du Pas-de-la-Mule, before they perceived three horsemen under the arcade at the entrance of the Rue Sainte Catherine.

It was D'Artagnan and Porthos, who were proceeding enveloped in their cloaks, which their swords lifted. Behind them came Planchet, with his musket on his thigh.

Athos and Aramis dismounted on seeing D'Artagnan and Porthos, who did the same. D'Artagnan remarked that the three horses, instead of being held by Bazin, were fastened to the rings of the arcades. He ordered Planchet to do as Bazin did.

Then they advanced to meet each other, followed by their valets, and saluted politely.

"Where shall we talk, gentlemen?" said Athos, who perceived that many persons were stopping and waiting to see if it was not to be one of those famous duels still vivid in the memory of the Parisians, and more especially of those who inhabited the Place Royale.

"The gate is fastened," said Aramis; "but if these gentlemen like the fresh air, under the trees, and undisturbed solitude, I will get the key from the Hôtel de Rohan, and we shall be all right."

D'Artagnan gazed into the darkness of the place, and Porthos thrust his head through two of the bars, to fathom its shades.

"If you prefer another place," said Athos, with his noble and persuasive voice, only choose for yourselves."

"This will be the best spot possible, I believe," said D'Artagnan, "if M. d'Herblay can procure the key."

Aramis immediately went off, first warning Athos not to remain within reach of D'Artagnan and Porthos. But the man to whom this warning was given only smiled disdainfully, and took a step toward his old friends, both of whom remained where they were.

Aramis went to the Hôtel de Rohan and knocked, and soon reappeared with a man who was saying:

"And do you swear it to me, sir?"

"There," said Aramis, giving him a louis.

"Then you will not swear, sir?" said the porter, shaking his head.

"Why, can a person take his oath about anything?" replied Aramis. "I only declare to you that, at this present moment, these gentlemen are friends of ours."

"Yes, certainly," coldly replied Athos, D'Artagnan, and Porthos.

D'Artagnan had heard this dialogue and understood it.

"Do you see?" said he to Porthos.

"What is it that I am to see?"

"That he would not swear."

"Swear — about what?"

"That man wished Aramis to swear that we were not going on the Place Royale to fight."

"And Aramis would not swear?"

"No."

"Attention, then!"

Athos did not take his eyes from them as thus they talked. Aramis opened the gate and drew to one side to let D'Artagnan and Porthos enter. As he entered, D'Artagnan caught the handle of his sword in the bars of the gate, and was obliged to push aside his cloak. In doing this he exposed the shining butt of his pistols, which a stray moonbeam illumined.

"Do you see?" said Aramis, touching Athos's shoulder with one hand, and with the other pointing to the arsenal that D'Artagnan wore at his girdle.

"Alas! yes," replied Athos, with a profound sigh.

And he followed the other two in.

Aramis entered the last, and locked the gate behind him. The two lacqueys remained outside; but, as if they also had distrusted each other, they kept at a distance.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PLACE ROYALE.

They walked in silence to the very centre of the Place; but as, at this moment, the moon was just coming out from behind a cloud, they reflected that, in this exposed situation, they might be easily seen; they went under the linden trees, *where* the shade was deeper.

There were benches here and there. The four gentlemen stopped before one of them, and, at a sign from Athos, D'Artagnan and Porthos sat down, while Athos and Aramis remained standing before them.

After the lapse of some moments, during which each of them felt the embarrassment of commencing an explanation:

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "a proof of the strength of our old friendship is given by our presence at this interview. Not one of us has failed; no one, therefore, feels any self-reproaches."

"Listen, Count," said D'Artagnan. "Instead of paying one another compliments, which perhaps none of us deserve, let us explain ourselves, like frank and honourable men."

"I ask nothing more," replied Athos. "I am frank; speak with all frankness. Have you anything for which to reproach me or the Abbé d'Herblay?"

"Yes," said D'Artagnan. "When I had the honour of seeing you at the Château de Bragelonne, I was the bearer of propositions which you thoroughly understood. Instead of answering me as a friend, you played with me as if I were a child; and this friendship of which you boast was not shattered by the shock of our swords yesterday, but by your dissimulation at your own château."

"D'Artagnan!" said Athos, in a voice of gentle reproach.

"You asked for frankness," replied D'Artagnan; "you have it! You ask my opinion; I tell it you. And now I have it equally at your service, M. l'Abbé d'Herblay. I acted the same toward you, and you deceived me in the same manner."

"Really, sir, you are very strange," said Aramis; "you came to make me certain propositions; but *did* you make them? No; you sounded me — that was all. Well, what did I say to you? That Mazarin was a mean rascal, and that I would not serve him — that is all! Did I tell you that I would not serve another? On the contrary, I gave you to understand, I think, that I supported the Princes. We even, if I am not mistaken, joked most agreeably on the probable chance of your receiving an order from the Cardinal to arrest me. Were you not a party man? Without doubt you were. Well, why should not we be party men also? You had your secret, as we had ours. We did not exchange them; so much the better — it proves that we know how to keep our secrets."

"I make you no reproaches, sir," said D'Artagnan; "it is

only because the Comte de la Fère has spoken of friendship that I examine your conduct."

"And what do you think of it?" demanded Aramis haughtily.

The blood instantly mounted to D'Artagnan's temples. Standing up, he replied:

"I think it worthy of a disciple of the Jesuits."

On seeing D'Artagnan stand up Porthos had also stood up. So the four men were now in a threatening attitude, facing each other.

At D'Artagnan's answer, Aramis made a motion as if to put his hand to his sword.

Athos stopped him.

"D'Artagnan," said he, "you come here still furious from last night's adventure. D'Artagnan, I thought your heart so noble that a friendship of twenty years' duration would have resisted a momentary wound to your self-love. Come, now, tell me, do you really think that you have somewhat with which to reproach me? If I am in fault, D'Artagnan, I will confess my fault."

Athos's grave and harmonious voice still had its old influence on D'Artagnan; while that of Aramis, which always became sharp and harsh in his ill-humour, irritated him. Therefore he replied to Athos:

"I think, Monsieur le Comte, that you had a secret to confide to me at the Château de Bragelonne, and that monsieur," he went on to say, as he indicated Aramis, "had one to confide to me at his monastery. If this had been done, I should not have engaged in an adventure where you would have been opposing me. Yet, because I was discreet, it was not necessary to take me for a complete fool. If I had wished closely to examine the difference between the persons admitted by M. d'Herblay by his rope ladder and those whom he admitted by his wooden ladder, I should have compelled him to speak to me."

"What are you meddling with?" exclaimed Aramis, pale with anger at the suspicion lest, having been watched by D'Artagnan, he had been seen with Madame de Longueville.

"I meddle with what concerns me, and I can pretend not to have seen what does not concern me. But I hate hypocrites, and in that category do I place Musketeers who *become* abbés and abbés who become Musketeers; and," he

ıded, turning toward Porthos, "here is monsieur who is of ıy opinion."

Porthos, who had not yet spoken, replied by only one word nd a gesture.

He said, "Yes," and put his hand to his sword.

Aramis gave a bound backward and drew his weapon. 'Artagnan stooped down, ready to attack or to defend himelf.

Then Athos stretched out his hand with that gesture of upreme command which belonged to himself alone, slowly rew forth his sword and the scabbard at the same time, napped off the blade in its sheath, by breaking it on his knee, nd threw the two pieces aside.

Then, turning toward Aramis:

"Aramis," said he, "break your sword."

Aramis hesitated.

"You must," said Athos. Then, in a lower and gentler oice, "I wish it."

Aramis, paler than ever, but vanquished by that gesture, onquered by that voice, broke the flexible blade between his ands, crossed his arms, and waited, boiling with rage.

This movement made D'Artagnan and Porthos step back. 'Artagnan did not draw his sword; Porthos sheathed his.

"Never," said Athos, slowly raising his right hand toward eaven, — "never, I swear it before that God who sees and ears us in the solemn stillness of this night — never shall my word touch yours — never shall my eye cast a glance of anger t you — never shall my heart throb in hatred toward you! Ve have lived together, we have hated and loved together, we ave shed and mingled our blood, and perhaps I might yet dd that there is a bond between us even stronger than riendship — perhaps there is the compact of crime. For we all ur judged, condemned, and executed a human being whom we ad perhaps no right to cut off from this world, although she ppeared to belong to hell rather than to this world. D'Artanan, I have always loved you as my son. Porthos, we slept de by side for ten years. Aramis is your brother, as he is ine; for Aramis has always loved you as I do now, and as I ıall always love you. What can Mazarin be to us, who anquished the hand and heart of such a man as Richelieu? What can any Prince be to us who established the crown on a ueen's head? D'Artagnan, pardon me for having crossed my

sword with you yesterday? Aramis does the same to Porthos. And now hate me if you can; but I swear to you that, in spite of your hatred, I shall never cease to esteem and love you. Now repeat my words Aramis; and after that, if they wish it, and if you wish it, let us leave our old friends forever!"

There was a moment of solemn silence, which was broken by Aramis.

"I swear," said he, with a calm front and a loyal look, but with a voice in which a last quiver of emotion was perceptible, — "I swear that I have no longer any enmity toward those who were my friends. I swear that I regret having crossed swords with you, Porthos. I swear, in short, that not only mine shall never again be directed against your heart, but that, for the future, no least remnant of a hostile feeling against you shall remain hidden in my inmost thought! Come, Athos."

Athos made a movement as if to retire.

"Oh, no, no! do not go!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, carried away by an irresistible outburst that betrayed the warmth of his heart and the natural uprightness of his soul, — "do not go — for I also must take an oath. I swear that I would give the last drop of my blood, and the last fragment of my body, to keep the esteem of such a man as you are, Athos, and the friendship of a man like you, Aramis!" And he threw himself into Athos's arms.

"My son!" said Athos, pressing him to his heart.

"And I," said Porthos, "do not swear, but — Sacre-bleu! — I am choking! If I was compelled to fight against you, I verily believe that I should let myself be run through and through, for I never loved any but you in the world!"

And the worthy Porthos threw himself into Aramis's arms, with tears in his eyes.

"My friends," said Athos, "this is what I was hoping, what I was expecting from such hearts as yours. Yes, I have said it, and I repeat it — our destinies are irrevocably united, although we may follow different paths. I respect your opinion, D'Artagnan; I respect your conviction, Porthos; but although we fight for opposite sides, let us keep friends. Ministers, princes, and kings will pass by like a torrent and civil war like a flame; but shall we remain? I have a presentiment that we shall."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "let us always be Musketeers, and let us always guard, as our only flag, that famous napkin of the Bastion de Saint Gervais, which the great Cardinal had embroidered with three fleurs-de-lis."

"Yes," said Aramis, "Cardinalists or Frondeurs, what do we care? Let us be good seconds to each other in all our duels, devoted friends in all serious matters, and joyous friends in all our pleasures."

"And every time that we may chance to meet in the shock of battle," said Athos, "at the sole word, 'Place Royale,' let us change our swords to the left hand and stretch out the right to each other, were it in the midst of carnage."

"You speak admirably," said Porthos.

"You are the greatest of men," cried D'Artagnan, "and surpass us by ten cubits.

Athos smiled with ineffable joy.

"It is, therefore, decided," said he. "Come, gentlemen, give me your hands. Are you in some measure Christians?"

"Pardieu!" said D'Artagnan.

"We will be so at any rate for this occasion, to remain faithful to our oath," said Aramis.

"Ah, I am ready to swear by anything you please," said Porthos, "even by Mahomet! The devil take me if I was ever so happy in my life as I am at this moment!"

And the good Porthos wiped his eyes still wet.

"Has any one of you a cross?" demanded Athos.

Porthos and D'Artagnan looked at each other and shook their heads, like men who had been taken unawares.

Aramis smiled and drew from his bosom a diamond cross, hung around his neck by a string of pearls.

"Here is one," said he.

"Very well!" replied Athos, "let us swear on this cross — which, in spite of its materials, is still a cross — let us swear to be united, in spite of everything, and forever; and may this oath not only bind ourselves, but even our descendants! Does this oath satisfy you?"

"Yes," they all said with one voice.

"Ah, traitor," whispered D'Artagnan in Aramis's ear, — "you have made us swear on the crucifix of a *Frondeuse!*"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FERRY ON THE OISE.

We hope that the reader has not entirely forgotten the you traveller whom we left on the road to Flanders.

Raoul, on losing sight of his guardian, whom he left gazi after him opposite the royal cathedral, had spurred on l horse, first to escape his melancholy thoughts, and then conceal from Olivain the emotion that agitated him.

But an hour of rapid riding quickly dissipated the gloo shadows that had hung darkly over the youth's fertile ima nation. That yet unknown pleasure of feeling absolutely f — a pleasure that has its charm, even for those who h never felt the weight of independence — gilded for Raoul t heaven and the earth, and, more than all, the distant a azure-tinted horizon of life called the Future.

And yet he found out, after several attempts at conversat with Olivain, that long days passed in this manner would very dull; and the recollection of the Count's discourse, gentle, persuasive, and interesting, came back to him, as passed through towns concerning which no one could give h such valuable information as he might have drawn from Ath the most intelligent and the most amusing of guides.

Another recollection also saddened Raoul's heart. reaching Louvres he had seen a tiny château, almost hidd by a screen of poplars, and this had so forcibly recalled that La Vallière to his memory that he had stopped nearly minutes to look at it, and had resumed his journey sighi and without answering Olivain, who had respectfully qu tioned him as to the cause of this delay. The aspect of ext nal objects is a mysterious conductor corresponding to the fib of memory — it makes them awaken, sometimes in spite of o selves; and when once this thread is touched, like Ariadn it leads in to a labyrinth of thoughts, where one is lost in l lowing that shadow of the past which is called Recollecti Now, the sight of this château had sent Raoul back fi leagues toward the west, and had made him trace back his l from the moment when he took leave of his little Louise that when he saw her for the first time; and each clump oaks, each weathercock surmounting a tiled roof, reminded h

instead of returning to the friends of his childhood, he very moment going farther from them, and that, perhaps, l even left them forever.

h swelling heart and heavy head, he commanded Olivain e the horses to a small inn, which he saw by the road- bout half a musket-shot from the spot they had reached. mself dismounted, and remained under a beautiful group stnuts in full blossom, around which multitudes of bees buzzing, and desired Olivain to order the host to bring and ink to a table which he saw there, all ready for him te on.

ain obeyed and rode along; while Raoul sat down, lean- is elbow on the table, with his eyes wandering vaguely he charming landscape, sprinkled with green fields and rs of trees; from time to time he shook from his hair the ms that fell on him like snowflakes.

had been there about ten minutes, during five of which s lost in a reverie, when he saw a rubicund figure, with tin about his body and one on his arm, and a white cap s head, coming toward him, with pen, ink, and paper in nd.

ha!" said this apparition, "it is plain that all gentlemen he same ideas; for it is not a quarter of an hour since a nobleman, well mounted, as you are, of lofty air, like lf, and about the same age, halted under this cluster of and made me bring this table and this chair, and dined ith an old gentleman, who looked like his tutor, off a t a crumb of which they left, and a bottle of old Mâcon not one drop of which they left. But fortunately we ome more of the same wine, and pies of equal goodness; , sir, you will give your orders" —

, my friend," said Raoul, smiling, "I thank you. At t I merely want what I have asked for; only I hope the black and the pen good; on these conditions I will give ice of the wine for the ink and the price of the pie for n."

ry well, sir," said the host, "I will give the wine and the your servant, and in this way you will get the pen and o the bargain."

as you like," said Raoul, who began his apprenticeship his peculiar class of society, which, when there were s on the highway, was leagued with them, and which,

now there are no longer any robbers, very worthily supplies their place.

The host, made easy by payment in advance, laid the pen, ink, and paper on the table. The pen chanced to be a tolerable one, and Raoul began to write.

The host had remained standing before him, and looked with involuntary admiration at that charming countenance, so serious and yet so gentle. Beauty always has been, and always will be, a queen.

"He is not such a guest as I had just now," said the host to Olivain, who came to see if Raoul wanted anything; "your young master has no appetite."

"My young master had plenty of appetite three days ago," said Olivain; "but what would you have? He lost it the day before yesterday."

And Olivain and the host went to the inn — Olivain, as is usual with lacqueys who are happy in their situations, recounting all he could concerning the young gentleman.

In the meantime Raoul was writing:

"*Sir:*

"*After having travelled four hours, I stop to write to you; for I miss you every moment, and I am always ready to turn my head to answer you, as if you were speaking to me. I was so completely stunned at your departure, and so greatly distressed at our separation, that I very feebly expressed all the tenderness and gratitude I felt for you. You will excuse me, sir; for your heart is so generous that you must have understood all that passed in mine. Write to me, sir, I beseech you, for your counsels constitute a part of my existence; and besides, if I may say so, I am uneasy; it seemed to me that you were preparing yourself for some perilous expedition, on which I dared not ask you any questions, for you told me nothing about it. Therefore you may imagine that I much want to hear from you. Since you are no longer near me, I am in continual fear of making some mistake. You were my main support, sir, and now I protest that I find myself very solitary.*

"*Will you be so kind, sir, when you receive any news from Blois, to send me a few words concerning my little friend, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whose health, you are aware, was causing some anxiety at our departure? You understand, my dear guardian, how valuable, indeed indispensable, to me is the*

recollection of the time that I have passed with you. I hope that sometimes you will also think of me; and if you should miss me at certain moments, if you should experience some slight regret at my absence, I should feel overwhelmed with joy on thinking that you have perceived my affection for you and devotion to you, and that I have been able to make you realise them during the time that I had the happiness of living with you."

When his letter was finished, Raoul felt calmer. He looked to see if the tavern-keeper and Olivain were watching him, and then impressed a kiss on the paper — a mute and touching caress, which the heart of Athos was capable of divining as he opened the letter.

In the meantime, Olivain had drunk his bottle and eaten his pie. The horses also were refreshed; and Raoul, having beckoned the host to come to him, threw a crown on the table, remounted his horse, and put his letter into the post at Senlis.

The repose that the horses and their riders had taken allowed them to continue their journey without stopping. At Verberie, Raoul ordered Olivain to get some information about the young gentleman who preceded them. He had been seen to pass by about three-quarters of an hour before; but, as the innkeeper had said, he was well mounted, and travelling at a good pace.

"Let us try to overtake this gentleman," said Raoul to Olivain. "Like ourselves, he is going to the army, and would be an agreeable company for us."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Raoul reached Compiègne. He there made a good dinner, and again inquired about the young gentleman who was before him. He had stopped, like Raoul, at the Hôtel de la Cloche et de la Bouteille, which was the best inn at Compiègne, and had continued his journey, saying that he should sleep at Noyon.

"Let us sleep at Noyon also," said Raoul.

"Sir," answered Olivain respectfully, "allow me to observe that we have already greatly fatigued the horses. It would be a better plan, I think, to sleep here, and to set off early in the morning. Eighteen leagues are quite sufficient for a first day's journey."

"Monsieur le Comte de la Fère wishes me to make haste," said Raoul, "and wants me to join the Prince on the fourth morning; let us, therefore, push on to Noyon; that will be a

day's ride equal to what we made on coming up from Blois Paris. We shall get there by eight o'clock; the horses w have the whole night to rest; and to-morrow, at five in t morning, we will start anew."

Olivain dared not oppose this determination; but he f lowed, murmuring.

"Go on, go on," said he between his teeth, "and expend yo fire the first day. To-morrow, instead of a journey of twen leagues, you will make one of ten; day after to-morrow, one five; and in three days you will be in bed. Then you will obliged to rest. All these young gentlemen are such boasters

It is quite perceptible that Olivain had not been brought in the school of the Planchets and Grimauds.

Raoul really felt fatigued, but he wanted to try his power educated in the principles of Athos, and quite certain of havi heard him talk a thousand times of rides of twenty-five league he did not wish to be inferior to his model. D'Artagna also, that iron man, who appeared to be formed of sinews a muscles, had struck him with admiration.

He was, therefore, urging his horse forward faster a faster, in spite of Olivain's observations, and following charming little by-road that led to a ferry and shorten the distance a league, as he had been told, when, on reac ing a hilltop, he perceived the river before him. A sm body of horsemen was standing on the bank, ready to embar Raoul had no doubt that this was the gentleman and escort. He called out to them, but the distance prevented being heard. Then Raoul put his horse, tired as it was, to t gallop; but an undulation of ground soon concealed the trav lers from his view, and when he reached another elevation t ferry-boat had left the bank and was gliding to the other sid

Raoul, seeing that he could not arrive in time to pass t ferry with the travellers, stopped for Olivain.

At this moment a cry was heard that seemed to co from the river. Raoul turned in the direction whence it p ceeded, and putting his hand before his eyes, which were d zled by the setting sun:

"Olivain," said he, "what do I see down there?"

A second cry resounded, more piercing than the first.

"Oh, sir!" cried Olivain, "the ferry-rope is broken, a the boat is drifting away with the stream. But what do I s in the water — some one struggling?"

"Oh, it certainly is a horse and a rider!" exclaimed Raoul, gazing at a part of the river where the sun was shining splendidly.

"They are sinking!" cried out Olivain.

It was indeed true; and Raoul began to be convinced that an accident had happened, and that a man was drowning. He gave his horse his head, struck the spurs into his flanks, and the animal, urged by the pain and feeling his freedom, leaped over a kind of railing which surrounded the place of embarkation and fell into the river, driving far before him whole floods of foam.

"Ah, sir!" cried Olivain, "what in the world are you doing? Seigneur Dieu!"

Raoul directed his horse toward the drowning man. And, after all, it was an exercise with which he was familiar. Brought up on the banks of the Loire, he had, it may be said, been cradled on its waves. A hundred times had he crossed it on horseback, a thousand by swimming.

Athos, foreseeing the time when he should make a soldier of the Viscount, had schooled him in these exercises.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried Olivain, in utter despair, "what would the Count say if he saw you now?"

"He would have done just the same himself," said Raoul, vigorously urging his horse forward.

"But I — I! — what am I to do?" cried Olivain, in great agitation, on the bank of the river. "How am I to get across?"

"Leap, coward!" exclaimed Raoul, still swimming. Then addressing the traveller, who was struggling about twenty paces from him: "Courage! sir," said he; "courage! Help is at hand."

Olivain advanced, retreated, made his horse rear and turn round; and at last, goaded by shame, he leaped in, as Raoul had done, but crying out:

"I am a dead man! We are lost!"

In the meantime the boat went rapidly down, being carried away by the stream, and the cries of those it bore were heard at a distance.

A grey-haired man had leaped from the ferry-boat into the river, and was swimming vigorously toward the drowning person; yet he made but little progress, for he was obliged to go against the stream.

Raoul still went on, and visibly gained ground; but horse and its rider, whom he kept in sight, were percepti sinking. The horse had only his nostrils above the wat and the rider, who had lost the reins in his struggles, stretcl out his arms and let his head fall back. A minute more a all disappeared.

"Courage!" cried Raoul, — "courage!"

"It is too late," murmured the young man, — "too late The water passed above his head and stifled his voice.

Raoul sprang from his horse, which he left to take care itself, and in three or four strokes was close to the gentlem He immediately seized the horse by the bit and raised his h above the water; the animal thus breathed more freely, a as if it had known that assistance was come, it redoubled efforts. Raoul at the same time laid hold of one of the you man's hands and guided it to the mane, which it grasped w the tenacity of a drowning man. Certain that the rider wo not now let go his hold, Raoul devoted all his attention to horse, which he guided toward the opposite bank, assistin and encouraging it with his voice. Suddenly the animal stri shallow water and got a footing.

"Saved!" exclaimed the grey-haired man as he also reacl the shallow water.

"Saved!" mechanically murmured the gentleman, letting the mare and falling from the saddle into Raoul's arms.

Raoul was not ten paces from the bank, to which he carri the gentleman, perfectly insensible, laid him on the grass, t tied the strings of his collar, and unfastened the clasps of doublet.

A minute after the grey-haired man was by his side.

Olivain had also at last managed to land, after making ma signs of the cross; and the people in the boat directed the selves to shore as well as they could by the aid of a pole wh was, by chance, on board.

Gradually, thanks to the measures taken by Raoul and t man who accompanied the young cavalier, life returned to t pale cheeks of the dying youth, who opened his eyes, at fi wandering, but soon fixed on his preserver.

"Ah, sir!" he exclaimed, "I was looking for you. But you I should have been dead — three times dead."

"But you are recovering, sir," said Raoul, "and we shall off with only a ducking."

"Oh, sir, what gratitude do we owe you!" said the grey-haired man.

"Ah! are you here, my good D'Arminges? I have frightened you enough, have I not? But it is your own fault. You were my tutor; why did you not teach me to swim better?"

"Ah, Count!" replied the old man, "if any misfortune had befallen you I should never have dared to appear before the Marshal again."

"But how did the thing happen?" inquired Raoul.

"In the simplest manner in the world, sir," replied he who was called Count. "We were about a third of the way across when the ferry-rope broke. My horse, frightened by the cries and the bustle of the boatmen, leaped into the stream. I swim but badly, and did not dare to throw myself into the river, so that instead of aiding I paralyzed my horse's efforts, and I was in a fair way of drowning most gallantly when you reached me just in the nick of time to pull me out of the water. Therefore, sir, if you have no objection, we are from henceforth friends for life and death."

"Sir," answered Raoul, "I am entirely at your service, I assure you."

"My name is the Comte de Guiche," continued the cavalier; "my father is the Marshal de Grammont. And now that you know who I am, will you do me the honour to tell me who you are?"

"I am the Viscomte de Bragelonne," said Raoul, blushing that he could not name his father, as the Comte de Guiche had done.

"Viscount, your face, your kindness, and your courage attract me. You already possess all my gratitude. Let us embrace. I ask your friendship."

"Sir," said Raoul, returning the Count's embrace, "I already love you with all my heart. Consider me, therefore, I beseech you, as your devoted friend."

"And now, where are you going, Viscount?" inquired De Guiche.

"To the Prince's army, Count."

"And so am I," exclaimed the Count, in a transport of joy. "Ah! so much the better; we will fire our first pistol-shot together."

"That's right," said the tutor; "love each other; you are

both young; you were no doubt born under the same star, and were destined to meet."

The two young men smiled with the confidence of youth.

"And now," said the tutor, "you must change your dress. Your lacqueys, to whom I gave orders the moment they left the ferry-boat, must have already reached the hôtel; they are warming the linen and wine. Come!".

The young men had no objection to make to this proposition; on the contrary, they thought it excellent. They immediately remounted their horses, looking at and admiring each other. They were, in reality, two elegant cavaliers, with active and slender figures, noble and open faces, mild yet proud looks, with bright and winning smiles. De Guiche might be about eighteen years old, but he was scarcely taller than Raoul, who was only fifteen.

By a spontaneous impulse they joined hands, and spurring their horses, rode from the river to the hôtel, side by side; the one finding a fascination and joy in that life which he had so nearly lost; the other thanking God that he had already lived long enough to perform an action that would be pleasing to his guardian.

Olivain was the only one whom his master's spirited exploit did not completely satisfy. He kept wringing out the sleeves and skirts of his coat, thinking that if they had halted at Compiègne, he would not only have escaped this accident, but also the cold and rheumatism that must naturally result from it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SKIRMISH.

THE halt at Noyon was short, and every one slept soundly. Raoul had given orders to call him if Grimaud came; but Grimaud did not come.

The horses doubtless fully appreciated the eight hours of uninterrupted rest and of abundant provender granted them. The Comte de Guiche was awakened at five by Raoul, who came to wish him good morning. They breakfasted in haste, and by six o'clock had already ridden two leagues.

The young Count's conversation was most interesting to

Raoul, who listened attentively, and the Count talked incessantly. Educated at Paris, where Raoul had only been once, — at the Court, which Raoul had never seen, — his pranks as a page, two duels in which he had contrived to be engaged, in spite of the edicts, and, more than all, in spite of his tutor, — these were things that appealed most powerfully to Raoul's curiosity. Raoul had been only to M. Scarron's, and he told De Guiche the persons he had seen there. De Guiche knew every one: Madame de Neuillan, Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Mademoiselle Paulet, and Madame de Chevreuse. He satirised every one with keen wit. Raoul trembled lest he should also satirise Madame de Chevreuse, for whom he felt a genuine deep sympathy. But whether from instinct, or from affection for the Duchesse de Chevreuse, the Count praised her most warmly; this doubled Raoul's friendship for him.

Then came the topic of gallantries and love-affairs. On this, also, Bragelonne had much more to hear than to tell. So he listened and fancied that he could perceive, through three or four rather insignificant adventures, that the Count, like himself, had a secret hidden in the bottom of his heart.

De Guiche, as we have said, had been brought up at Court, and all its intrigues were well known to him. It was that Court of which Raoul had heard so much from the Comte de la Fère; only it had greatly changed since the period when Athos had himself seen it. Consequently the Comte de Guiche's story was quite fresh to his companion. The young Count, sarcastic and witty, passed every one in review. He related the former amours of Madame de Longueville with Coligny, and his fatal duel on the Place Royale, with Madame de Longueville witnessing it from behind a window-blind; her recent amours with the Prince de Marcillac, who was said to be so jealous of her that he would willingly kill every one, even the Abbé d'Herblay, her spiritual director; the amour of the Prince of Wales with Mademoiselle, who was afterwards called la grande Mademoiselle, and celebrated for her secret marriage with Lauzun. The Queen herself was not spared; and the Cardinal Mazarin had also a share of his raillery.

The day passed like an hour. The Count's tutor, a man of the world, fond of good living, and, as his pupil declared, wise to his very teeth, often reminded Raoul of

Athos, his profound learning and his keen and sarcastic witticisms; yet for grace, delicacy, and nobility of appearance no one could be compared to the Comte de la Fère.

With more consideration for their horses than had been displayed on the previous day, they halted about four o'clock in the afternoon at Arras. They were approaching the scene of war, and determined to remain at that town till the morning, as parties of Spaniards sometimes took advantage of the night to make excursions, even to the outskirts of Arras.

The French army stretched from Pont-à-Marc to Valenciennes, covering Douai. The Prince himself was said to be at Béthune.

The enemy's army extended from Cassel to Courtray; and as they committed every species of outrage and pillage, the poor people on the frontiers were leaving their lonely dwellings and taking refuge in the fortified towns, which promised them protection. Arras was thus encumbered with fugitives.

There was talk of an immediate battle that would probably be decisive, the Prince up to that time having been only manœuvring, in expectation of his reënforcements; these had just reached him. The young men congratulated themselves on arriving so opportunely.

They supped together, and slept in the same chamber. They were at the age of sudden friendships; it seemed to them that they had known each other since their childhood, and that it would be impossible for them ever again to separate.

The evening was passed in talking war. The lacqueys cleaned their arms; the young men loaded their pistols to be prepared for a skirmish; and they woke up in despair, having both dreamt that they had arrived too late for the battle.

In the morning it was reported that the Prince de Condé had evacuated Béthune, to retire on Carvin, leaving, however, a garrison in the former town; but as this news was not certain, the young men determined to continue their journey toward Béthune, since it was in their power to strike off to the right on their way and ride to Carvin.

The Comte de Guiche's tutor had a thorough knowledge of the country; so he proposed to take a cross-road that led between the road of Lens and that of Béthune. At Ablain they would get news. Directions were left for Grimaud.

They set off about seven o'clock in the morning.

De Guiche, who was young and impetuous, said to Raoul:

"Here we are, three masters and three valets. Our valets are well armed; and yours appears to me to be a tough fellow."

"I have never seen him at work," answered Raoul; "but he is a Breton, and that promises well."

"Yes, yes," said De Guiche, "and I am certain that he would use his musket on a proper occasion. I have two trusty men, who served with my father; we are therefore six combatants. If we should fall in with a small body of partisans, equal, or even superior to ourselves, shall we not charge them, Roaul?"

"Yes, sir, by all means," answered Raoul.

"Holà, young gentlemen, holà!" cried the tutor, mingling in the conversation. "Vertudieu! how you are getting on! And my instructions too, Count? Do you forget that I have orders to conduct you safe and sound to the Prince? Once with the army, you may get yourself killed if you like; but till then, as general-in-chief, I tell you I shall command a retreat and turn back at the first feather that I spy out."

De Guiche and Raoul smiled and looked at each other out of the corners of their eyes. The country was growing somewhat wooded, and from time to time they met small companies of peasants, who were retreating, driving their cattle before them, and carrying in their wagons, or their arms, their most valuable effects.

They reached Ablain without accident. There they learnt that the Prince had really quitted Béthune, and was halting between Cambrin and La Venthie, so, after again leaving directions for Grimaud, they took a cross-road, which in about half an hour conducted the little troop to the banks of a small stream that runs into the Lys.

The country was charming, intersected by valleys as green as emerald. From time to time they came upon small copses, through which the road they were following ran. At each of these woods, the tutor, fearing some ambuscade, put the Count's two lacqueys in front as a vanguard. The tutor and the two young men formed the main body of the army; and Olivain, with his carbine on his knee and his eye alert, protected the rear.

For some time a tolerably dense forest had been rising in the horizon. Having arrived within a hundred paces of this wood, M. d'Arminges took his usual precautions and sent the

Count's two lacqueys forward. They had just disappeared under the trees, the young men and the tutor, laughing and talking, followed at about the distance of a hundred paces, and Olivain was the same distance in the rear, when suddenly five or six musket-shots were heard. The tutor cried out, "Halt!" The young men obeyed, and drew up their horses. At the same moment the two lacqueys were seen returning at full gallop.

The young men, eager to learn the cause of this firing, pushed forward to meet the lacqueys and the tutor followed them.

"Were you stopped?" demanded the young men eagerly.

"No," replied the lacqueys, "probably we were not even seen; the shots were fired a hundred paces or so in advance of us, in the thickest part of the wood, and we are come for orders."

"My advice," said M. d'Arminges, "and, if necessary, my command, is that we turn back; this wood may conceal an ambuscade."

"Did you not see anything?" said the Count to the lacqueys.

"I thought I saw some horsemen," replied one of them, "dressed in yellow, gliding into the bed of the stream."

"That 's it!" said the tutor; "we have fallen in with a party of Spaniards. Back, gentlemen, back!"

The young men consulted each other by a glance, and at this moment a pistol-shot was heard, followed by two or three cries for help.

The youths made themselves sure, by another glance, that they were both of the same mind not to retreat; and as the tutor had already turned his horse they both spurred forward, Raoul crying out, "Follow me, Olivain!" and the Count, "Follow me, Urbain and Blanchet!"

And before the tutor had recovered from his surprise they had already disappeared in the forest.

While the young men were spurring their horses each took a pistol in his hand.

In less than five minutes they reached the place whence the noise appeared to have come; there they checked their horses and went forward with precaution.

"Hush!" said De Guiche, "there are some horsemen."

"Yes; three on their horses and three who have dismounted."

"What are they doing? Can you see?"

"Yes; it seems to me they are plundering some one wounded or dead."

"It is a cowardly assassination," said De Guiche.

"And yet they are soldiers," replied Bragelonne.

"Yes, but partisans; that is to say, highway robbers."

"Charge!" said Raoul.

"Charge!" responded De Guiche.

"Gentlemen!" cried the poor tutor, "gentlemen, in the name of Heaven" —

But the young men did not heed him; they were gone off in emulation, and the tutor's cries had no other result than to rouse the attention of the Spaniards.

The three partisans who were on horseback immediately rushed forward to meet the two young men, while the three others finished plundering the two travellers; for, on coming near, the young men perceived two bodies, instead of one, stretched on the ground.

At the distance of ten paces De Guiche fired first, and missed his man. The Spaniard who was coming to meet Raoul fired in his turn, and Raoul felt a pain, like a blow from a whip, in his left arm. At four paces he fired his shot, and the Spaniard, struck in the middle of the chest, stretched out his arms, and fell back on the crupper of his horse, which turned and bore him off.

At this moment Raoul saw, as through a cloud, the barrel of a musket directed toward him. Athos's advice came into his mind; by a motion as quick as lightning he made his horse rear. The shot was fired; the horse shied, lost his footing, and fell, with Raoul's leg under him.

The Spaniard rushed forward, clubbing his musket, to break Raoul's head with the butt-end.

Unfortunately, in Raoul's position he could neither draw his sword from the scabbard nor a pistol from his holsters; he saw the butt of the musket swinging over his head, and, in spite of himself, he was just closing his eyes, when, with one bound, De Guiche was on the Spaniard, and put his pistol to his head.

"Surrender," cried he, "or you are a dead man!"

The musket fell from the hand of the soldier, who immediately gave in.

Guiche called one of his lacqueys, delivered the prisoner

into his custody, with orders to blow out his brains if he attempted to escape, leaped from his horse, and went up to Raoul.

"Faith, sir," said Raoul, laughing, although his pallor betrayed the natural emotion of a first affair, "you are prompt in paying your debts; evidently you do not wish to remain longer under obligation. But for you," said he, repeating the Count's words, "I had been dead — three times dead."

"My opponent, by taking flight," said De Guiche, "made it quite easy for me to come to your aid. But are you seriously wounded? I see that you are covered with blood."

"I believe," said Raoul, "that I have something like a scratch on my arm. Help me to get out from under my horse, and nothing, I hope, will prevent our continuing our journey."

M. d'Arminges and Olivain had already dismounted, and were raising the horse, which was struggling in its last agonies. Raoul managed to draw his foot from the stirrup and his leg from beneath the horse, and in a moment he was up.

"Nothing broken?" said De Guiche.

"Faith, no, thank Heaven!" answered Raoul. "But what is become of the unfortunate men whom these wretches have assasinated?"

"We got here too late; they have killed them, I believe, and escaped with their booty. My two lacqueys are standing by the bodies."

"Let us go and see whether they are quite dead, and if some assistance might not be given them," said Raoul. "Olivain, we have obtained two horses, but I have lost mine; take the best of the two for yourself and give me yours."

And they went to the place where the two victims lay extended on the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MONK.

Two men lay stretched out: the one motionless, with his face on the earth, pierced by three balls and swimming in blood, — this one was dead.

The other had been placed with his back against a tree by the two lacqueys, and, with his eyes raised toward Heaven,

and clasped hands, he was praying earnestly. He had received a ball which had broken his thigh bone.

The young men went first to the dead man, and looked at each other with astonishment.

"He is a priest," said Bragelonne; "he wears the tonsure. Oh, the cursed wretches, who could lay hands on the ministers of God!"

"Come here, sir," said Urbain, an old soldier, who had gone through all the campaigns with the Cardinal Duke; "come here. Nothing can be done with that man; but perhaps the other may be saved."

The wounded man smiled sadly.

"Save me! No," said he; "but you can assist me to die."

"Are you a priest?" demanded Raoul.

"No, sir."

"Because it seems your unfortunate companion belonged to the Church," said Raoul.

"He is the curé of Béthune, sir. He was carrying the sacred vessels of his church, and the treasure of his chapter, to a place of safety; for the Prince abandoned our town yesterday and perhaps the Spaniards may be there to-morrow. Now, as it was known that parties of the enemy were scouring the country, and the expedition was dangerous, no one dared to accompany him. I therefore offered myself."

"And these wretches attacked you — these abominable wretches fired upon a priest!"

"Gentlemen," said the wounded man, looking round him, "I am in great pain, and yet I should like to be carried into some house."

"Where your wound might be treated," said De Guiche.

"No — where I may confess."

"But, perhaps," said Raoul, "you are not so dangerously wounded as you imagine."

"Sir," said the wounded man, "believe me, there is no time to lose: the ball has broken the thigh bone and penetrated the intestines."

"Are you a doctor?" asked De Guiche.

"No," said the dying man; "but I know something of wounds, and mine is mortal. Endeavour, therefore, to carry me somewhere where I can find a priest, or take the trouble to bring one here, and God will reward the righteous act. My soul must be saved — my body is lost."

"To die in performing such a good action! It is imp ble!" said Raoul.

"Gentlemen, in the name of Heaven," said the wou man, rallying all his strength to rise, "let us not lose tin useless words. Either assist me in gaining the neighbou village or swear to me, by your hopes of salvation, that will send me the first priest, the first monk, the first curé meet. But," he added, in accents of despair, "perhaps nc will dare to come — for it is known that the Spaniards scouring the country — and I shall die without absolut My God! my God!" added the wounded man in an acce terror which made the young men shudder; "you will allow that, will you? It would be too terrible!"

"Calm yourself, sir," said De Guiche; "I swear that shall have the consolation you ask for. Only tell us w there is a house where we can ask for assistance, and a vi where we may seek for a priest."

"Thank you, and may God reward you! There is an about half a league from this spot, on this same road; about a league beyond the inn, you will find the villag Greney. Go to the curé, or should he not be at home go t convent of the Augustins, which is the last house in the vil on the right-hand side, and bring me one of the brot What does it signify, monk or curé, provided he has rec from Holy Church the power of absolution *in articulo mort*

"M. d'Arminges," said De Guiche, "remain with this u tunate man, and take care that he is carried as gently as sible. Make a litter with the branches of trees, and pu our cloaks on it; two of our lacqueys will carry it, while third will be ready to relieve the one who may be tired. Viscount and I will go in search of a priest."

"Go, sir," said the tutor; "but, in the name of Heave not expose yourself!"

"Make yourself easy. Besides, we are safe for to-day. know the axiom — '*Non bis in idem.*'"

"Courage, sir," said Raoul to the wounded man; "we g perform your wishes."

"God bless you, gentlemen!" replied the dying man, i tone of gratitude impossible to describe.

And the two youths went off at a gallop in the direc pointed out, while the tutor superintended the making of litter.

having proceeded about ten minutes, the young men
d the inn.
, without dismounting, called the landlord, and
l him that a wounded man would shortly be brought
ouse, and requested him to prepare everything neces-
dressing his wound, such as a bed, bandages, and lint;
him, moreover, if he knew of any physician or surgi-
ıtor, to send for him, and engaged himself to pay the
er.
andlord, seeing two young gentlemen richly dressed,
l all they asked; and our two cavaliers, after having
preparations for his reception begun, again departed
rred forward toward Greney.
had proceeded about a league and were already begin-
listinguish the first houses of the town, the roofs of
overed with red tiles, stood out against the green
rounding them, when they saw coming toward them,
on a mule, a poor monk, whom, from his large hat
grey woolen frock, they took for an Augustinian
his time chance appeared to send them what they

drew near to the monk.
ıs a man of about twenty-two or twenty-three years
ut ascetic habits had apparently aged him. He was
ıot with that clear pallor which is comely, but of a
ellow; his short hair, which came scarcely below his
very light; and his clear blue eyes seemed devoid of
ion.
' said Raoul, with his usual politeness, "are you an
tic?"
y do you ask me?" said the stranger, with an indiffer-
ıost uncivil.
t we may know it," replied the Comte de Guiche
y.
tranger touched his mule with his heel and continued
ay.
uiche placed himself before him and barred his pas-
Answer, sir," said he; "you have been questioned
, and every question deserves an answer."
ı at liberty, I suppose, to say or not to say who I am,
two first chance comers who may take a fancy to
ı me?"

De Guiche with difficulty restrained the violent desire he had to break the monk's bones.

"First," said he, making a great effort to master himself, "we are not the two first chance comers. My friend is the Vicomte de Bragelonne, and I am the Comte de Guiche. Besides, it is not from any caprice that we ask you the question; for there is a man yonder, wounded and dying, who is imploring the aid of the Church. If you are a priest, I charge you, in the name of humanity, to come with me to this man's aid; and if you are not, it is another thing; and I warn you, in the name of that courtesy which you seem so completely to ignore, that I shall chastise you for your insolence."

The monk's pallor became lividness; and he smiled in such a strange manner that Raoul, who did not take his eyes off him, felt that smile wring his heart like an insult.

"He is some Spanish or Flemish spy," said he, putting his hand to the butt of one of his pistols.

A menacing glance like a lightning flash was the reply to Raoul's remark.

"Well, sir, will you answer?" demanded De Guiche.

"I am a priest, gentlemen," said the young man.

And his countenance resumed its usual indifference.

"Then, father," said Raoul, letting his pistol again fall into the holster, and assuming a tone of respect that did not come from his heart, — "then, if you are a priest, you will, as my friend has said, speedily have an opportunity of exercising your vocation. An unfortunate man, who is coming this way and is wounded, will soon be at the next inn. He asks for the assistance of one of God's ministers. Our people are now waiting on him."

"I will go there," said the monk.

And he touched his mule with his heel.

"If you do not go there, sir," said De Guiche, "depend on it that we have horses capable of overtaking your mule, and sufficient influence to have you arrested, wherever you may be; and then, I swear, your trial will soon be finished. A tree and a cord are to be found everywhere!"

The monk's eye flashed again, but that was all. He repeated his phrase, "I am going there," and departed.

"Let us follow him," said De Guiche; "it will be the safest way."

"I was going to propose it," said Bragelonne.

And the two young men proceeded, regulating their pace by that of the monk, whom they followed at about the distance of a pistol-shot.

After about five minutes the monk turned round to see whether he were followed or not.

"Do you see?" said Raoul; "we have done well."

"What a horrible face that monk has!" said De Guiche.

"Horrible!" replied Raoul; "and especially his expression — his yellow hair, his dull eyes, his lips which disappear every time he speaks."

"Yes, yes," said De Guiche, who had been less struck by all these particulars, for Raoul was examining him while De Guiche was talking, — "yes, a strange face; but these monks are compelled to undergo such degrading practices. Their fasts make them pale, the cruelty of their discipline makes them hypocrites, and their eyes grow dull through lamenting the good things of life which they have lost and which we enjoy."

"At last," said Raoul, "this poor man will have his priest; but, *par Dieu!* the penitent appears to have a better conscience than his confessor. I own I am accustomed to see priests with quite a different aspect."

"Ah!" said De Guiche, "you do not comprehend. This is one of those wandering brothers who go begging about on the highways till such time as Heaven may give them a benefice. They are generally foreigners — Scotch, Irish, or Danes. I have often had such men pointed out to me."

"As ugly?"

"No; but reasonably hideous, nevertheless."

"What a misfortune for this poor wounded man to die under the hands of such a hedge priest!"

"Bah!" said De Guiche; "absolution does not come from him who gives it, but from God. And yet, I tell you what: I would rather die impenitent than have anything to do with such a confessor. You agree with me, don't you, Viscount? I saw you caressing the butt of your pistol, as if you were tempted to blow his brains out."

"Yes, Count, it is a strange thing, and will surprise you: I experienced an indescribable horror on seeing that man. Did you ever start up a snake in your path?"

"Never," said De Guiche.

"Well, I have done so in the woods of Blois. I remember when I first saw *the reptile*, looking at me with its leaden

eyes, coiled up, shaking its head, and vibrating its tongue, I stood pale, and, as it were, fascinated, until the Comte de la Fère" —

"Your father?" demanded De Guiche.

"No, my guardian," replied Raoul, coloring.

"Very well."

"Till the moment when the Comte de la Fère said, 'Come, draw, Bragelonne;' then only did I run up to the reptile, and, just as it raised itself on its tail and hissed ready to attack me, I cut it in two. Well, I protest to you that I felt exactly the same sensation at the sight of this man when he said, 'Why do you ask me?' and when he looked at me."

"And so you blame yourself for not having cut him in two like your snake?"

"Faith, I do — almost!" said Raoul.

At this moment they came in sight of the inn, and saw, on the other side of it, the little procession of the wounded man, led by M. d'Arminges. Two of the party were carrying the dying man; the third led the horses.

The young men plied the spur.

"There is the wounded man," said De Guiche, on passing the Augustinian friar; "have the goodness to make a little haste, Sir Monk."

Raoul went the width of the road from the friar, and as he passed him turned his head from him in disgust.

Thus the young men preceded, instead of following, the confessor. They went to meet the wounded man, and announced the good news. He raised himself to look in the direction indicated; saw the monk, who was hastening his mule forward; and fell back on the litter, his countenance illumined with joy.

"Now," said the young men, "we have done all we can for you, and as we are in haste to join the Prince's army, we must continue our journey. You will excuse us, will you not, sir? It is reported that a battle will soon take place, and we should not wish to arrive too late for it."

"Go, young gentlemen," said the wounded man, "and may you both be blessed for your compassion to me. You have indeed, as you say, done all you could for me, and I can only say, may God preserve you and those who are dear to you!"

"Sir," said De Guiche to his tutor, "we will go forward again; you will rejoin us on the road to Cambrin."

The landlord was at his door, and had prepared everything:

bed, bandages, and lint; and a groom had been sent for a surgeon at Lens, which was the nearest town.

"Very good," said the landlord, "everything shall be done as you wish. But will you not stop, sir, to have your own wound dressed?" he continued, addressing Bragelonne.

"Oh! my wound is nothing," said the Viscount; "it will be time enough for me to think of that at the next halt. Only have the goodness, if you should see a horseman pass, and if he should inquire respecting a young man mounted on a chestnut horse and followed by a lacquey, to tell him that you have seen me, but that I have continued my journey, proposing to dine at Mazingarbe and to sleep at Cambrin. That horseman is my servant."

"Would it not be a better and more certain way if I were to ask him his name and to tell him yours?" asked the landlord.

"There is no harm in the extra precaution," answered Raoul. "I am the Vicomte de Bragelonne, and his name is Grimaud."

At this moment the wounded man arrived from one direction and the monk from the other. The two young men drew away to let the litter pass. The monk got off his mule and ordered it to be led into the stable, but not unsaddled.

"Sir Monk," said De Guiche, "confess this excellent man properly, and do not distress yourself about your own expenses and those of your mule; everything is paid."

"Thank you, sir," said the monk, with one of those smiles that had made Bragelonne shudder.

"Come along, Count," said Raoul, who appeared unable to endure the Augustinian's presence, — "come along, I feel quite ill here."

"Thank you once more, my handsome young gentlemen," said the wounded man; "do not forget me in your prayers."

"Be assured I will not," said De Guiche, spurring forward to rejoin Bragelonne, who was by this time twenty yards away.

Just then the litter, borne by two lacqueys, entered the house. The landlord and his wife, who had hastened forward, were standing on the steps of the staircase. The unfortunate wounded man appeared to be suffering extreme pain, and yet his only anxiety was whether the monk was following him.

At sight of this pale and blood-stained man, the woman seized her husband's arm.

"Well, what is the matter?" said he; "do you feel ill?"

"No, but look!" said the hostess, pointing to the wounded man.

"Indeed," replied the host, "he seems to me to be very ill."

"That is not what I mean," continued the woman, trembling. "I ask you if you do not recognise him?"

"That man? Just wait" —

"Ah! I see that you recognise him," said the woman, "for you also grow pale."

"Really, now," cried the host; "bad luck to our house! It is the former executioner of Béthune!"

"The former executioner of Béthune!" murmured the young monk, starting back, and betraying by his countenance the repugnance that his penitent inspired.

M. d'Arminges, who was standing by the door, perceived his hesitation.

"Sir Monk," said he, "although he is, or has been, an executioner, this unfortunate creature is yet a man; render him, therefore, the last service that he requires of you, and your work will be but the more meritorious."

The monk made no answer, but silently went toward the low-studded room, where the two valets had already laid the dying man on a bed.

On seeing the man of God approaching the wounded man's bedside the two lacqueys left the room, and shut the door on the monk and his penitent.

D'Arminges and Olivain were waiting for them; they remounted their horses and all four set off at a trot, following the road down which Raoul and his companion had already disappeared.

At the very moment that the tutor and his escort were in their turn disappearing from sight another traveller stopped at the door of the inn.

"What do you wish for, sir?" asked the landlord, still pale and tembling from the discovery he had just made.

The traveller imitated a man drinking, and, getting off his horse, pointed to him, and made the motion of a man rubbing him.

"Ah! the devil!" said the landlord, "it seems that this one is dumb. And where do you wish your drink brought?" he inquired.

"*Here!*" said the traveller, pointing to a table.

"I was mistaken," said the landlord; "he is not quite dumb." And, bowing, he went for a bottle of wine and some biscuits, which he placed before his taciturn guest.

"Do you wish for anything else, sir?" said the landlord.

"Yes," said the traveller.

"And what is it, sir?"

"To know whether you have seen a young gentleman of fifteen pass by on a chestnut horse, followed by a lacquey?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne?" asked the landlord.

"Exactly so."

"Then you are called M. Grimaud?"

The traveller nodded.

"Well, then," replied the landlord, "your young master was here not a quarter of an hour ago; he will dine at Mazingarbe and sleep at Cambrin."

"How far from here to Mazingarbe?"

"Two leagues and a half."

"Thanks."

Grimaud, sure of meeting his young master before the end of the day, appeared easier, wiped his forehead, and poured out a glass of wine, which he drank in silence.

He had just placed the glass on the table, and was going to fill it again, when a terrible cry came from the room in which were the monk and the dying man.

Grimaud started to his feet.

"What is that?" said he; "whence comes that cry?"

"From the wounded man's chamber," replied the landlord.

"What wounded man?" asked Grimaud.

"The former executioner of Béthune, who has just been assassinated by Spanish partisans; they have brought him here, and he is now confessing to an Augustine friar; he seem to be in great pain."

"The former executioner of Béthune!" murmured Grimaud, trying to bring him back to his recollections; "a man between fifty-five and sixty, tall, powerful, dark, and with hair and beard quite black?"

"That's it, except that his beard has grown grey and his hair white. Do you know him?" asked the landlord.

"I saw him once," answered Grimaud, whose countenance grew dark at the picture which this recollection presented to his imagination.

The woman ran up to them in great agitation.

"Did you hear?" she said to her husband.

"Yes," replied the landlord, looking anxiously toward the door.

At this moment a cry less powerful than the first, but followed by a long and continuous groan, was heard.

The three looked at each other with a shudder.

"We must see what is the matter," said Grimaud.

"It sounds like a man being murdered," said the landlord.

"Jesus!" said his wife, crossing herself.

If Grimaud spoke but little, it is well known that he was a man of action. He rushed toward the door and shook it violently; but it was bolted inside.

"Open!" cried the landlord; "open, Sir Monk, — open this instant!"

No one answered.

"Open or I will break down the door!" said Grimaud.

The same silence continued.

Grimaud cast his eyes around and discovered a crowbar that chanced to be in a corner; he seized it, and before the landlord could prevent him had broken in the door.

The room was inundated with blood, which was trickling through the mattress. The wounded man was speechless, and there was a rattling in his throat. The monk was gone.

"The monk!" cried the landlord; "where is the monk?"

Grimaud rushed toward an open window that looked into the courtyard.

"He must have fled this way," said he.

"Do you think so?" asked the frightened landlord. "Waiter, see whether the monk's mule is in the stable."

"The mule is gone!" said he to whom the question was addressed.

Grimaud frowned; the landlord clasped his hands and looked around him with distrust; his wife had not dared enter the room, but was standing at the door utterly terrified.

Grimaud went up to the wounded man, studying his harsh and strongly marked features, which brought back to his mind such a terrible recollection.

At last, after a moment's gloomy and mute contemplation:

"There is no longer a doubt," said he; "it is really he."

"Does he still live?" asked the landlord.

Grimaud, without answering, opened his waistcoat to feel his heart, while the landlord also drew near; but they both

suddenly started back, the landlord uttering a cry of terror, and Grimaud turning pale.

The blade of a poignard was buried, even to the hilt, in the left side of the executioner's breast.

"Run for some assistance!" said Grimaud. "I will remain with him."

The landlord left the room, frightened out of his wits; his wife had run away when she heard her husband's exclamation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ABSOLUTION.

THIS is what had taken place. We have seen that it was not voluntarily, but much against his inclination, that the monk attended the wounded man, who had been recommended to him in such a singular manner. Perhaps he would have tried to escape, had it seemed possible; but the threats of the two young gentlemen, their attendants, who had stayed after they had gone and had doubtless received their instructions, and, lastly, to tell the whole truth, reflection itself had compelled the monk to retain the character of a confessor, without betraying too much ill-will; and, having once entered the room, he approached the wounded man's bedside.

With a rapid glance characteristic of those who are on the verge of death, and who consequently have not a moment to lose, the executioner surveyed him in whom he hoped to find a comforter. Making a movement of surprise, he said:

"You are very young, my father."

"People who wear my robe have no age," drily responded the monk.

"Alas! speak more gently to me, father," said the wounded man; "I much want a friend in my last moments."

"Are you suffering severely?" demanded the monk.

"Yes; but in soul much more than in body."

"We will save your soul," replied the young man; "but are you really the executioner of Béthune, as these people said?"

"That is to say," replied the wounded man with great quickness, doubtless fearing lest the name of executioner should deprive him of the last benefits of religion which he

required, — "that is to say, I was the executioner, but am so no longer. I gave up the office fifteen years ago. I still attend the executions officially, but no longer strike the blow myself. Oh, no!"

"You therefore feel great repugnance to your office, do you not?"

The executioner heaved a deep sigh.

"So long as I struck in the name of law and justice only," said he, "my employment, sanctioned as it was by their authority, allowed me to sleep in tranquillity; but since that terrible night when I became the instrument of private vengeance, and, with a feeling of hatred, raised the sword against one of God's creatures, — since that day" —

The executioner stopped, shaking his head with an air of mute despair.

"Speak," said the monk, who was sitting at the foot of the bed, and who began to feel an interest in a recital that had such a singular beginning.

"Ah!" exclaimed the dying man, with all the force of a secret sorrow long repressed, and at last unburdened, — "ah! how I have endeavoured to stifle my remorse by twenty years of good works. I have struggled to conquer that ferocity natural to those who shed blood; on every opportunity I have exposed my own life to save the lives of those who were in danger; and I have preserved many lives in exchange for those I have taken away. And that is not all: the property I have acquired by my profession I have distributed among the poor; I have been assiduous in church going; and the people who avoided me have become accustomed to the sight of me. All have forgiven, some have even loved me; but I believe that God has not pardoned me; for the recollection of this execution never leaves me for one single instant, and methinks the spectre of that woman rises before me every night."

"A woman! So you assassinated a woman?" exclaimed the monk.

"And you also!" cried the executioner — "you make use of that word which is incessantly ringing in my ear — 'assassinated.' So then I assassinated, and not executed her! So then I am an assassin, and not an instrument of the law!"

And he closed his eyes, uttering a groan.

The monk no doubt feared that he would die without telling him any more; for he went on eagerly:

"Proceed; I know nothing about it; and, when you have finished your story, God and I will judge you."

"Oh, my father!" continued the executioner, without opening his eyes, as if he feared, on opening them, to behold some dreadful object, — "in the dark more particularly, and when by chance I am crossing some river, this unconquerable terror redoubles. It then seems to me that my hand grows heavy, as if it were weighed down by my sword; that the water becomes blood-colour; and that all the sounds of nature — the rustling of the leaves, the murmur of the wind, the rippling of the stream — combine to form a voice, mournful, despairing, and terrible, that cries out to me: 'Let the justice of God have its course!'"

"Delirium!" murmured the monk, shaking his head.

The executioner opened his eyes, tried to turn himself toward the young man, and seized his arm.

"Delirium!" he repeated; "delirium, do you say? Oh, no! for it was in the evening, for I cast her body into the river, for the words that my remorse repeats — those very words I in my pride pronounced. After having been the instrument of human justice, I believed that I was become the instrument of God's justice."

"But let me hear how all this happened. Speak," said the monk.

"One evening a man came to me and showed me an order. I followed him. Four more gentlemen awaited me. They took me with them, masked. I secretly determined to refuse, should the purpose for which they required me appear to me to be unjust. We proceeded for about five or six leagues, gloomy and silent, almost without exchanging one word. At last, through the window of a small cottage, they showed me a woman leaning on a table, and said, 'There is the woman whom you must execute.'"

"Horror!" said the monk; "and you obeyed them?"

"My father, that woman was a monster. It was said she had poisoned her second husband, and had attempted to assassinate her brother-in-law, who was one of these men. She had just poisoned a young woman, who was her rival; and it was said that before she left England, she had caused the King's favourite to be stabbed."

"Buckingham?" exclaimed the monk.

"Yes, Buckingham."

"So that woman was an Englishwoman?"

"No, she was a Frenchwoman, but she had married i England."

The monk turned pale, wiped his forehead, arose and bolte the door. The executioner thought that he was going t abandon him, and fell back, groaning, on the bed.

"No, no — here I am," said the monk, returning quickly t him. "Continue. Who were those men?"

"One was a foreigner, an Englishman, I believe; the othe four were French, and wore the dress of Musketeers."

"Their names?" demanded the monk.

"I did not know them; but four of them called the Englis man 'My Lord.'"

"And was this woman beautiful?"

"Young and beautiful! Oh, yes, very beautiful. I ca see her now, when, on her knees at my feet, she prayed, wit her head turned backwards. I have never since been abl to understand how I could sever a head so beautiful and s pale."

The monk appeared to be agitated by a strange emotion Every limb trembled; and it was evident that he wished t put a question, but dared not.

At last, after a violent effort to restrain himself: "Th name of this woman?" said he.

"I do not know it. As I have told you, she had marrie twice, it appears, — once in France and once in England."

"And you say she was young?"

"Twenty-five years old."

"Beautiful?"

"Ravishingly so."

"Fair?"

"Yes."

"With long hair reaching to her shoulders — was it no so?"

"Yes."

"With eyes of admirable expression?"

"When she chose. Oh, yes, it was so."

"And a voice of singular sweetness?"

"How do *you* know?"

The executioner raised himself on his elbow and fixed hi terrified look on the monk, who had become livid.

"And you killed her!" said the monk; "you became th

instrument of those cowards who dared not kill her themselves! You had no pity for her youth, her beauty, her weakness! You killed that woman!"

"Alas!" replied the executioner, "I have told you, my father, that under such a heavenly exterior that woman concealed the soul of a demon; and when I saw her, when I recalled all the evil that she had committed against me" —

"Against you? And what could she have done to you? Let me hear."

"She had led my brother astray, and destroyed him; he was a priest — she had fled with him from her convent."

"With your brother?"

"Yes, my brother was her first lover. She had been the cause of my brother's death. Oh, father, father! do not look at me in that manner. Oh, am I so very guilty? Oh, you will not pardon me?"

The monk composed his countenance.

"Yes, yes," said he, "I will pardon you, if you tell me all."

"Oh!" exclaimed the executioner, "all! all!"

"Then answer me. If she led your brother astray — you said that she led him astray?"

"Yes."

"If she caused his death — you said that she caused his death?"

"Yes," repeated the executioner.

"Then you must know her maiden name."

"Oh, my God! my God!" cried the executioner. "I feel as if I were dying. Absolution, my father! The absolution!"

"Tell me her name!" exclaimed the monk, "and I will give it to you."

"She was named — my God, have pity on me!" murmured the executioner, as he fell back on the bed, pale, shuddering, and like a man at the point of death.

"Her name!" repeated the monk, bending down over him as if to tear the name away in case he would not tell it, — "her name! Speak, or no absolution!"

The dying man appeared to collect all his strength.

The monk's eyes sparkled.

"Anne de Bueil," murmured the wounded man.

"Anne de Bueil!" cried the monk, stretching himself to his full height and raising his hands to heaven, — "Anne de Bueil! You really said Anne de Bueil, did you not?"

"Yes, yes, that was the name. And now give me absolution, for I am dying."

"I absolve you?" said the priest, with a laugh which made the dying man's hair stand erect upon his head, — "I absolve you? I am not a priest!"

"You are not a priest!" exclaimed the executioner; "and who are you, then?"

"You wretch, I will soon tell you who I am!"

"Ah, my God!"

"I am John Francis de Winter!"

"I do not know you!" cried the executioner.

"Wait, wait — you shall soon know me! I am John Francis de Winter," he repeated, "and that woman" —

"Well, that woman?"

"Was my mother."

The executioner then uttered the first cry — that terrible cry, which had been heard first.

"Oh! pardon me, pardon me!" murmured he — "if not in the name of God, at least in your own name — if not as a priest, at any rate as a son."

"Pardon you!" exclaimed the false priest — "pardon you! God may do so, perhaps; but I — never — never!"

"For pity's sake!" said the executioner, stretching forth his arms toward him.

"No pity for him who had no pity. Die impenitent — die in despair — die, and be damned!"

And drawing a dagger from beneath his frock and burying it in his breast:

"There," said he, "there is my absolution!"

Then was heard that second cry, feebler than the first, and followed by a prolonged groan.

The executioner, who had raised himself up, fell back on the bed. The monk, without withdrawing the dagger from the wound, ran to the window, opened it, jumped down upon a flower-bed, glided into the stable, took his mule out by a back door, hastened to the first clump of trees, where he threw off his monk's frock, drew from his valise a complete horseman's dress, clothed himself in it, gained the first posting-house on foot, procured a horse, and in that manner rode post in the direction of Paris.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GRIMAUD SPEAKS.

GRIMAUD had remained alone with the executioner. The ıost was gone for assistance, the woman was praying.

After the interval of a moment or two, the wounded man ›pened his eyes.

"Help!" murmured he, "help! Oh, my God! my God! can find no one to help me to live or die?"

And by a great effort he raised his hand to his breast; it ıncountered the handle of the dagger.

"Ah!" said he, like a man who remembers something.

And he let his arm fall again.

"Take courage," said Grimaud; "some one is gone for ıssistance."

"Who are you?" asked the wounded man, fixing his eyes ›n Grimaud with an unnatural stare.

"An old acquaintance," said Grimaud.

"You?"

The wounded man tried to recognise the features of the man who addressed him.

"How and when have we ever met?" he asked.

"One night, twenty years ago; my master found you at Béthune, and took you to Armentières."

"I know you well enough now," said the executioner; "you are one of the four lacqueys."

"Just so."

"Where have you come from?"

"I was passing by, and stopped at this inn to bait my horse. They were telling me that the executioner of Béthune was here wounded, when you cried out twice. At the first cry we hastened here, and at the second we broke open the door."

"And the monk," said the executioner, "did you see the monk?"

"What monk?"

"The monk who was shut up with me."

"No, he was no longer here; he must have escaped by the window. And did he stab you?"

"Yes," said the executioner.

Grimaud started to leave the room.

"What are you going to do?" inquired the wounded man.

"He must be pursued."

"By no means."

"And why not?"

"He avenged himself, and he did well. Now I hope that God will pardon me, for an expiation has been made."

"Explain yourself," said Grimaud.

"That woman whom you and your masters made me kill" —

"Milady?"

"Yes, Milady; true — that is what you called her" —

"What can the monk have to do with her?"

"She was his mother."

Grimaud staggered back, and looked at the dying man with a dull and almost stupid expression. "His mother!" he repeated.

"Yes, his mother."

"Then he knows the secret?"

"I took him for a monk, and I revealed it to him in confession."

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed Grimaud, his hair damp with perspiration at the mere idea of the consequences of such a revelation, — "unhappy man! You did not mention any name, I hope?"

"I did not mention any name, because I knew none except his mother's maiden name; he recognised her by that name. But he knows that his uncle was present as one of her judges."

And he fell back exhausted. Grimaud wished to assist him, and put his hand toward the handle of the dagger.

"Do not touch me," said the executioner; "if the dagger should be drawn out, I should die."

Grimaud withheld his hand; and then, suddenly striking his forehead:

"Ah! but if this man should find out who the others were, my master is lost."

"Hasten, hasten!" exclaimed the executioner; "warn him, if he still lives — warn his friends; my death, believe me, will not be the termination of this terrible adventure."

"Where was he going?" said Grimaud.

"Toward Paris."

"Who stopped him here?"

"Two young gentlemen who were going to the army, and ne of whom was called the Vicomte de Bragelonne; for I eard his name called by his comrade."

"And that was the young man who brought this monk to ou?"

"Yes."

Grimaud raised his eyes to heaven.

"Then it was the will of God," said Grimaud.

"Without doubt," replied the wounded man.

"That is very disquieting!" murmured Grimaud. "And et that woman deserved her fate. Do you not still think o?"

"When one is dying," said the executioner, "the crimes of thers look very small in comparison with one's own."

And he fell back exhausted, closing his eyes.

Grimaud was held there, between pity, which prevented his aving this man without aid, and fear, which urged him to epart instantaneously to carry this news to the Comte de la ère, when he heard a noise in the corridor, and saw the land- ord coming in with a surgeon, who at last had been found.

Many persons followed, attracted by curiosity; the report f this strange occurrence was beginning to be spread round.

The surgeon approached the dying man, who appeared to ave fainted.

"It is necessary first to draw the weapon from the breast," aid he, shaking his head in a significant manner.

Grimaud remembered the warning which the wounded man ad just given, and turned away his eyes.

The surgeon removed the coat, tore away the shirt, and ared his breast.

The weapon, as we have said, had been thrust in, even up to the hilt. The surgeon seized it by the handle; as he drew it out, the wounded man opened his eyes with a frightful stare. When the blade was entirely withdrawn from the wound, a red froth encircled the executioner's mouth; and at the first breath that he drew, a stream of blood spouted from the orifice of the wound. The dying man fixed his gaze on Grimaud with a singular expression, and then followed the choking death-rattle.

Grimaud picked up the poignard which lay on the floor, dripping with blood and inspiring all present with horror,

beckoned to the landlord to follow him, paid his expenses with a generosity worthy of his master, and mounted his horse.

At first he thought of returning straight to Paris; but then he realised the anxiety which his prolonged absence would occasion Raoul. He now knew that Raoul was only two leagues away — that in a quarter of an hour he could reach him — and that to go there, explain everything, and return would not occupy much more than an hour; he put his horse to a gallop, and in ten minutes dismounted at the *Mulet-Couronné*, the only inn at Mazingarbe.

At the first words which he exchanged with the innkeeper he found that he had at last overtaken him whom he was seeking.

Raoul was at table with the Comte de Guiche and his tutor; but the melancholy adventure of the morning had cast a sadness over the two young men, which the gayety of M. d'Arminges, more philosophical because more accustomed to such spectacles than they were, could not dissipate.

Suddenly the door opened and Grimaud entered, pale and covered with dust, and stained with the blood of the unfortunate wounded man.

"Grimaud, my excellent Grimaud!" cried out Raoul; "here you are at last! Excuse me, gentlemen; he is not a servant, but a friend."

And rising and hastening up to him: "How is the Count?" he continued; "does he miss me a little? Have you seen him since we separated? Answer! But I also have much to tell you: many adventures have happened to us in the last three days. But what is the matter with you? How pale you are! — and blood! — what does this blood mean?"

"There really is blood," said the Count, rising. "Are you wounded, my friend?"

"No, sir," said Grimaud; "this blood is not mine."

"But whose is it?" said Raoul.

"It is the blood of the unfortunate man you left at the inn, and who died in my arms."

"In your arms! Why, do you know who he was?"

"Yes," said Grimaud.

"He was the former executioner of Béthune."

"I know that."

"And you knew him?"

"I knew him."

"And he is dead?"

"Yes," answered Grimaud.

The two young men looked at each other.

"What would you have, gentlemen?" said D'Arminges; t is the common law of nature, and being an executioner es not exempt him from it. From the moment that I saw s wound I had a bad opinion of it; and you know that it as also his own opinion, since he asked for a monk."

At the word "monk" Grimaud turned pale.

"Come, come to table," said D'Arminges, who like all men that time, and especially of his age, did not permit senti- entality between two courses.

"Yes, sir, you are right," said Raoul. "Come, Grimaud, t something for yourself. Order, command; and after you ve refreshed yourself we will talk."

"No, sir," answered Grimaud, "I cannot stop one minute — must go back to Paris instantaneously."

"What! go back to Paris! You are mistaken: it is Olivain ho is to go back to Paris; you are to stay with me."

"On the contrary, Olivain is to stay with you, and I must go ck. I came expressly to tell you so."

"But why is this change?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Explain yourself."

"I cannot explain myself."

"Come, what do you mean by this jesting?"

"The Viscount knows that I never jest."

"Yes; but I also know that the Comte de la Fère said that ou were to remain with me, and that Olivain was to return to 'aris. I shall follow the Count's orders."

"Not under the present circumstances, sir."

"And you will disobey me, then?"

"Yes, sir; for it is absolutely necessary."

"Then you persist?"

"Yes, I am going. Farewell, Monsieur le Vicomte."

And Grimaud bowed and turned to leave the room. Raoul, furious and at the same time under great anxiety, ran after him and seized him by the arm.

"Grimaud," exclaimed Raoul, "remain. I command you!"

"Then," said Grimaud, "you wish me to leave the Count to certain death."

Grimaud bowed and was leaving the room.

"Grimaud, my friend," said the Viscount, "you will not go in this manner — you will not leave me in such anxiety. Grimaud, speak, speak, in the name of Heaven!"

And Raoul, staggering back, fell into a chair.

"I can only tell you one thing, sir, — for the secret which you ask for is not mine, — you met a monk, did you not?"

"Yes."

The two young men looked at each other with affright.

"You took him to the wounded man?"

"Yes."

"So you had time to observe him?"

"Yes."

"And perhaps you would recognise him if you met him again?"

"Oh, yes, I can swear to that."

"And I also," said De Guiche.

"Well, then, should you ever meet him again," said Grimaud, "wherever it may be, — on the high road, in the street, in a church, wherever you or he may be, — step on him and crush him, without mercy, without commiseration, as you would a viper, a snake, or an asp, — crush him, and do not leave him until he is dead! The lives of five men will be in danger so long as he lives!"

And without adding another word, Grimaud took advantage of the astonishment and terror into which he had thrown those who had heard him to rush out of the room.

"Well, Count," said Raoul, turning towards De Guiche, "did I not tell you that monk had the effect on me of a snake?"

Two minutes later galloping of a horse was heard. Raoul ran to the window; it was Grimaud, returning toward Paris. He waved his hat to the Viscount, and quickly disappeared round an angle of the road.

As he rode Grimaud reflected on two things: the first was that, at the rate he was going, this horse would not take him ten leagues; the second, that he had no money.

But Grimaud's imagination was the more fertile that he talked so little.

At the first post station that he came to he sold his horse, and with the money that it produced he took post.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EVE OF BATTLE.

UL was aroused from these melancholy reflections by the
'd, who rushed into the room, crying:
.e Spaniards! the Spaniards!"
cry was sufficient to drive every previous thought from
nd. The young men made some inquiries, and found
.e enemy was really advancing by Houdain and Béthune.
le M. d'Arminges was giving his orders to bring the
round, the two young men ran up to the highest win-
n the house, which commanded a view of all the sur-
ng country, and actually beheld a numerous force of
'y and cavalry, just making their appearance from the
ɔn of Marsin and of Lens. This time it was not a
straggling troop of partisans, but a complete army.
hey had no other alternative than to follow M. d'Ar-
's wise advice and beat a retreat.
young men ran down again. M. d'Arminges was already
eback; Olivain was holding their horses; and the Count's
/s were carefully guarding the Spanish prisoner, mounted
ıg that had just been purchased for that purpose. For
nal security, his hands were bound.
little troop took the road to Cambrin, where it was
t they would find the Prince; but he had left there the
ɾ before, and had retired to La Bassée, some false intel-
having induced him to believe that the enemy would
ıe Lys at Estaire.
ıct, the Prince being deceived by this information, had
ted Béthune and concentrated all his forces between
-Chapelle and La Venthie; and he himself, having been
ɔitring the whole line with the Marshal de Grammont,
st returned and sat down at table, questioning the
around him as to the information he had ordered each
ɑ to collect. But no one had positive news; the enemy's
ad disappeared forty-eight hours previously, and seemed
ɜ vanished.
, an enemy's army is never so near, and consequently so
ning, as when it has completely disappeared. So the
, contrary to his *usual* habit, was sullen and anxious,

when an officer on duty entered the room and informed Marshal de Grammont that some one wanted to speak to him.

The Duc de Grammont by a look obtained the Prince's permission, and left the room.

The Prince followed him with his eyes, and kept looking at the door, no one daring to speak for fear of interrupting his thoughts.

Suddenly a dull sound was heard. The Prince rose quickly, stretching forth his hand in the direction whence the sound proceeded. This sound was very familiar to him: it was the noise of a cannon.

Every one had risen with him.

At this moment the door opened.

"Monseigneur," said Marshal de Grammont, looking radiant, "will your Highness permit my son, the Comte de Guiche, and his travelling companion, the Vicomte de Bragelonne, to enter and give you some information concerning the enemy we are seeking, and whom they have found?"

"What!" said the Prince eagerly, "will I permit it? Not only do I permit, but I greatly desire it. Let them come in."

The Marshal brought forward the two young men, who found themselves in the Prince's presence.

"Speak, gentlemen," said the Prince, bowing to them; "we will afterwards pay each other the usual compliments. What is of the most pressing consequence to us all at present is to know where the enemy is and what he is doing."

It naturally devolved on the Comte de Guiche to speak; not only was he the elder of the two, but he was also introduced to the Prince by his father. Besides, he had long known the Prince, while Raoul now saw him for the first time.

He therefore recounted to the Prince everything they had seen at the inn at Mazingarbe.

In the meantime Raoul was studying this young general, already so famous by his battles of Rocroy, Fribourg, and Nordlingen.

Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, who, since the death of Henry de Bourbon, his father, was called, for the sake of brevity, and according to the custom of the time, "Monsieur le Prince," was a young man of not more than twenty-six or twenty-seven, with an eagle eye — "*agl'occhi grifani*," as *Dante says;* a hooked nose; and long hair flowing in curls

lown his back; of medium height, but well-built; having all he qualities of a great warrior; that is to say, a quick sight, a apid decision, and undaunted courage — all which did not prevent his being, at the same time, a man of elegance and wit; so much so that besides the revolution he made in war, by the improvements which he introduced into it, he had also caused a revolution at Paris among the young courtiers, of whom he was the natural leader, and who were termed *petits-maîtres* in contradistinction to the fashionable men of the old Court, of whom Bassompierre, Bellegarde, and the Duc d'Angoulême had been the models.

From the first words of the Comte de Guiche, and from the direction whence the sound of the cannon was heard, the Prince thoroughly understood everything. The enemy must have passed the Lys at Saint-Venant, and was marching on Lens, with the intention, doubtless, of taking possession of that town and cutting the French army off from France. The cannon which they heard from time to time above all other were the large guns of the town, which were replying to the artillery of the Spaniards and Flemish.

But of what strength was this body of men? Was it a corps intended for a diversion? or was it the entire army?

This was the Prince's last question, and it was impossible for De Guiche to answer.

Now, as this was the most important question of all, it was that also to which the Prince required an exact, precise, positive reply.

Raoul, therefore, conquered that natural feeling of timidity which, in spite of all his efforts, he felt pervading him in the Prince's presence, and approaching him, he said:

"Will monseigneur allow me to hazard some words on this subject? They may perhaps relieve him from his embarrassment."

The Prince turned and seemed to take in his whole figure at one glance, and then smiled on seeing a boy of scarcely fifteen.

"Oh, yes, certainly; speak, sir," said he, softening his curt, sharp manner of speaking, as if he were now addressing a woman.

"Monseigneur might question the Spanish prisoner," said Raoul, colouring.

"Have you taken a Spanish prisoner?" exclaimed the Prince.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Ah, and that's true," said De Guiche; "I had forgc it."

"That's natural enough," said Raoul, smiling, "as you him yourself, Count."

The old Marshal turned toward the Viscount, gratefu the praise thus bestowed on his son; while the Prince cried

"The young man is right; bring up the prisoner."

In the meantime the Prince took De Guiche aside questioned him how this prisoner had been made, at the time inquiring who this young man was.

"Sir," said the Prince, turning to Raoul, "I hear that bring a letter from my sister, Madame de Longueville; I find that you prefer recommending yourself by giving me advice."

"Monseigneur," said Raoul, colouring, "I did not wis interrupt your Highness in such an important conversatic that you were engaged in with the Count; but here is letter."

"Very well," said the Prince, "give it me by and by. is the prisoner; let us attend to more pressing business."

In fact, they were bringing in the prisoner. He was o those condottieri of whom some remained even at that pe selling their blood to any one who would purchase it, grown old in brigandage and plunder. Since he had taken he had not uttered one single word, so that those had captured him could not themselves tell to what natic belonged.

The Prince looked at him with an air of unspeakable dist

"Of what country are you?" he demanded.

The prisoner answered in some strange language.

"Ah, ha! it seems that he is a Spaniard. Do you s Spanish, Grammont?"

"Faith, monseigneur, very little."

"And I not at all," said the Prince, laughing. "Ge men," continued he, turning to those around him, "is there one among you who speaks Spanish, and will serve me a interpreter?"

"I will, monseigneur," answered Raoul.

"Ah! you speak Spanish?"

"Sufficiently well, I believe, to perform your Highn commands on this occasion."

During this time the prisoner had remained perfectly indifferent, and as if he had not in the slighest degree understood what was going on.

"Monseigneur has demanded of what country you are," said the youth, in the purest Castilian.

"*Ich bin ein Deutscher*," replied the prisoner.

"What the devil does he say?" demanded the Prince; "and what new gibberish is this?"

"He says that he is a German, monseigneur," replied Raoul; "and yet I doubt it, for his accent is bad and his pronunciation defective."

"You speak German also?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, monseigneur," answered Raoul.

"Sufficiently to question him in that language?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Question him, then."

Raoul commenced his questions, but the result bore him out in his conjectures. The prisoner did not understand, or pretended not to understand, what Raoul said, and Raoul could not comprehend the answers he gave, mixed as they were with Flemish and Alsatian. Nevertheless, amid all the prisoner's efforts to elude a regular examination, Raoul had detected the natural accent of the man.

"*Non siete Spagnuolo*," said he, "*non siete Tedesco, siete Italiano.*"

The prisoner started and bit his lips.

"Ah! this I understand perfectly," said the Prince, "and since he is an Italian, I will continue the examination myself. Thank you, Viscount," continued the Prince, laughing, "from henceforth I appoint you my interpreter."

But the prisoner was no more disposed to answer in Italian than in the other languages. What he wanted was to evade all questions whatever. Therefore he knew nothing — the number of the enemy, the name of the commander, or the object of their march.

"Very well," said the Prince, who well understood the cause of this ignorance; "this man has been taken pillaging and murdering; he might have purchased his life by his communications, but he will not speak; take him away, then, and shoot him."

The prisoner turned pale. The two soldiers who had brought him in took him by the arms and led him toward the door,

while the Prince, turning to Marshal Grammont, appeared to have already forgotten the order he had given.

Having reached the threshold, the prisoner stopped; the soldiers, who considered only their orders, wished to force him along.

"One moment," said the prisoner, in French; "I am willing to speak, monseigneur."

"Aha!" said the Prince, laughing, "I knew well enough we should come to that at last. I have a wonderful secret for unlocking tongues. Young men, take advantage of this lesson when you come to have a command."

"But," said the prisoner, "it is on condition that your Highness will swear that my life shall be safe."

"On the word of a gentleman," said the Prince.

"Then put your questions, monseigneur."

"Where did the army pass the Lys?"

"Between Saint-Venant and Aire."

"By whom is it commanded?"

"By the Count de Fuonsaldagna, by General Beck, and by the Archduke in person."

"Of how many men is it composed?"

"Of eighteen thousand men and thirty-six field pieces."

"And its march?"

"On Lens."

"There, do you see, gentlemen?" said the Prince, turning with an air of triumph toward the Marshal de Grammont and the other officers.

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the Marshal; "you have divined all that the human mind could divine."

"Recall Le Plessis, Bellièvre, Villequier, and D'Erlac," said the Prince; "recall all the troops that are on this side the Lys, and let them hold themselves in readiness to march to-night. To-morrow, in all probability, we shall attack the enemy."

"But, monseigneur," said the Marshal de Grammont, "consider that, in uniting all our disposable forces, we shall not be able to muster more than thirteen thousand men."

"Marshal," replied the Prince, with that wonderful look characteristic of him, "all great battles are gained with small armies."

Then turning toward the prisoner, he said:

"Take this man and guard him carefully. His life depends

n his communication: should it be true, he shall be liberated; f false, have him shot."

The prisoner was led off.

"Comte de Guiche," said the Prince, "it is a long time since ou have seen your father. Remain with him. Monsieur," ontinued he, addressing Raoul, "if you are not too tired, ollow me."

"To the end of the world, monseigneur!" exclaimed Raoul, eeling an inconceivable enthusiasm for this young general, ho appeared so worthy of his reputation.

The Prince smiled. He despised flatterers, but greatly steemed enthusiasts.

"Well, sir," said he, "you are a good adviser, as we have ust discovered. To-morrow we shall see how you behave nder fire."

"And what am I to do, monseigneur?" inquired the larshal.

"Remain to receive the troops. I will either come for them nyself, or will send a messenger for you to bring them to me. Twenty of the best mounted guards will be quite sufficient for ny escort."

"It is little enough," said the Marshal.

"It is quite sufficient," said the Prince. "Have you a good orse, Monsieur de Bragelonne?"

"Mine was killed yesterday, monseigneur, and I am using my lacquey's provisionally."

"Go and choose one that will suit you in my stables. And have no false modesty, but take that which you think the best horse. You will need it, perhaps, this evening, certainly to-morrow."

Raoul did not wait to be told twice; he knew that with superiors, especially when those superiors are princes, the height of politeness consists in prompt and unquestioning obedience. He went down to the stables, selected a dun Andalusian horse, saddled it and bridled it himself; for Athos had charged him, in moments of danger, to trust these important cares to no one; and he rejoined the Prince, who was just mounting his horse.

"Now, sir," said he to Raoul, "will you give me the letter which you bring?"

Raoul presented the letter to the Prince.

"Keep near me, monsieur," said he.

The Prince clapped spurs to his horse, hooked his bridle to the pommel of his saddle as he was accustomed to do when he wished to have his hands free, opened Madame de Longueville's letter, and went off at a gallop toward Lens, accompanied by Raoul and followed by his small escort; while the messengers who were to recall the troops set off at full speed in opposite directions.

The Prince read as he went.

"Sir," said he an instant after, "they speak most favourably of you. I have only one thing to tell you, which is that, from the little that I have heard and seen, I think still more highly of you than they have spoken."

Raoul bowed.

In the meantime, at every step that brought them nearer to Lens, the firing of cannon grew louder. The Prince's eyes were directed, with the intenseness of a bird of prey, on the point whence this sound came. It might have been imagined that he had the power of piercing through the screen of trees which were before him, and which bounded the horizon.

From time to time his nostrils dilated as if he was anxious to inhale the smell of powder, and he breathed hard like his horse.

At last the sound of the cannon was so near that it was evident they were not more than a league from the battle-field. In fact, at a turn of the road they could see the little village of Aunay.

The peasants were in great confusion: the report of the cruelty of the Spaniards had spread abroad and excited general consternation; the women had already fled in the direction of Vitry; some few men only remained.

At sight of the Prince they ran up; one of them recognised him.

"Ah, monseigneur," said he, "are you come to drive away all those beggarly Spaniards and those brigands of Lorraine?"

"Yes," said the Prince, "if you will act as my guide."

"Most willingly, monseigneur. Where does your Highness wish me to conduct you?"

"To some elevated spot, whence I may see Lens and its neighbourhood."

"In that case, I am your man."

"Can I trust you? Are you a good Frenchman?"

"I am an old soldier of Rocroy, monseigneur."

"Here," said the Prince, giving him his purse, "this is for Rocroy. Now, do you wish to have a horse, or do you prefer going on foot?"

"On foot, monseigneur, on foot. I have always served in the infantry. Besides, I expect to lead your Highness through paths where you will be obliged to dismount."

"Come then," said the Prince, "let us not lose any time."

The peasant set off, running before the Prince's horse. Then, about a hundred yards from the village, he took a narrow path hidden in the bottom of a pretty valley; for about half a league they proceeded thus, under the cover of the trees, the artillery sounding so near that at each report they might have expected to hear the whistling of the balls. At last they came to a path that branched off from the direct road to climb up the side of the mountain. The peasant took this path, requesting the Prince to follow him. He dismounted, and ordering one of his aides-de-camp and Raoul to do the same, and the others to remain there and keep a good lookout, he began to climb the path.

In ten minutes they reached the ruins of an old château; these ruins crowned the summit of a hill, from which they could command a view of the surrounding country. Barely a league away they could perceive Lens, at bay; and before Lens, all the enemy's army.

At a single glance the Prince embraced the whole extent of country spread before his eyes, from Lens even to Vimy. In an instant the whole plan of the battle, which on the next day was to save France a second time from invasion, displayed itself before his mind. He took a pencil, tore a leaf from his tablets, and wrote:

"*My dear Marshal:*

"*In one hour Lens will be in the enemy's hands. Come and rejoin me; bring the whole army with you. I shall be at Vendin, to place the men in position. To-morrow we shall retake Lens and whip the enemy.*"

Then returning to Raoul:

"Go, sir," said he, "at full speed, and put this letter into M. de Grammont's hands."

Raoul bowed, took the paper, ran down the mountain, threw himself on his horse, and set off full gallop.

In a quarter of an hour he had reached the Marshal.

A part of the troops were already arrived, and the other were expected every moment. The Marshal put himself at the head of all the disposable infantry and cavalry, and took the road to Vendin, leaving the Duc de Châtillon to bring up the rest.

All the artillery was ready to depart, and at once marched forward.

It was seven o'clock in the evening when the Marshal reached the rendezvous; the Prince was waiting for him. As he had foreseen, Lens had fallen almost immediately after Raoul had left him. The cessation of the cannonade announced that event.

They waited for the night; and as the darkness increased the troops successively arrived. Orders had been issued that no drum should be beat and no trumpet sound.

At nine o'clock the night had set in, but a last lingering ray still illumined the plain. They then marched in silence, the Prince leading the column.

Having got beyond Aunay, the army could perceive Lens: two or three houses were in flames, and a dull sound, that indicated the agony of a town taken by assault, reached the ears of the soldiers.

The Prince assigned to each his post. The Marshal de Grammont was to hold the extreme left, and rest upon Méricourt; the Duc de Châtillon led the centre; the Prince himself commanded the right wing, which rested on Aunay.

The order of battle on the following day was to be the same as the positions now taken; so that every one, on awaking, would find himself on the ground upon which he was to manœuvre.

The movement was executed in the most profound silence and with the most exact precision. At ten o'clock every one was in position; at half-past ten the Prince visited all the posts and gave the order for the next day.

Three things were most particularly recommended to the commanders, who were to see them scrupulously followed by the soldiers: the first, that the different corps should take care so to march that the cavalry and infantry should be in the same line, and that each should keep its proper distance.

The second, not to charge at double quick.

The third, to let the enemy fire first.

The Prince gave the Comte de Guiche to his father, and kept Bragelonne himself; but the two young men asked permission to pass the night together, which was granted.

A tent was pitched for them near the Marshal's. Although the day had been fatiguing, neither of them felt any inclination to sleep.

Besides, the eve of battle is a serious and imposing thing, even to old soldiers, and much more so to young men who are about to view this terrible spectacle for the first time.

On the eve of battle, you think of a thousand things that have hitherto been forgotten. On the eve of battle, common acquaintances become friends, friends become brothers.

It is needless to say that if there be any more tender sentiment at the bottom of the heart, that sentiment then naturally reaches its highest degree of tensity.

We may easily believe that some such feeling was experienced by each of the young men; for in a short time they both sat down at the end of the tent and began writing on their knees. The letters were long, the four pages were one after another filled with closely written and delicate manuscript. Occasionally they looked up and smiled. They understood each other, without a word being said. These two exquisite and delicate organizations were so constructed as to sympathise without speaking.

When the letters were finished they enclosed them in double envelopes, that no one might read the address without tearing open the first envelope; then they exchanged the letters.

"If any misfortune should befall me" — said Bragelonne.

"If I should be killed" — said De Guiche.

"Do not distress yourself about that," they both said.

Then, having kissed each other like brothers, they wrapped themselves in their cloaks, and slept the fresh and graceful sleep of birds, flowers, and children.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN OLDEN-TIMES DINNER.

THE second interview of the four Musketeers was not formal and threatening, like the first. Athos, with his usual superior good sense, had concluded that the table would be the speediest and completest centre of reunion; and at the very moment when his friends, awed by his superiority and sobriety, dared not to suggest one of those good old-time dinners, at the "Pomme-du-Pin" or the "Parpaillot," he first proposed that they should meet round some well-served table, and that each should speak and act with perfect frankness — a frankness that had kept up an understanding among them — that fellowship from which they had acquired the title of "The Inseparables."

The proposition was agreeable to all, but more especially to D'Artagnan, who eagerly craved a renewal of the good taste and gayety that characterised the society in which he had formerly mingled. For a very long time his fine and lively talent had received but meagre satisfaction — "vile food," as he himself termed it. Porthos, on the eve of becoming a baron, was enchanted at the opportunity of studying, in Athos and Aramis, the manners of people of quality. Aramis wished to gain, through D'Artagnan and Porthos, some information about the Palais Royal; and also to keep, against all emergencies, friends so devoted, who had formerly supported him in his quarrels with such prompt and invincible swords.

Athos was the only one who had nothing to expect or to receive from the others, and who was influenced only by a sentiment of true nobleness of soul, and of pure friendship.

It was therefore agreed that each should give his real address, and that, at the summons of one of the associates, the meeting should take place at the sign of the *Hermitage*, a famous tavern in the Rue de la Monnaie. The first meeting was fixed for the following Wednesday, at exactly eight o'clock in the evening.

The four friends arrived on that day, punctually at the appointed hour, each from his own affairs. Porthos had been trying a new horse; D'Artagnan came down from his guard at the Louvre; Aramis had been to visit one of his fair penitents in the neighbourhood; and Athos, who had taken up his abode

n the Rue Guénégaud, was close by. So they were surprised n all meeting at the door of the *Hermitage:* Athos having ome from the Rue de Pont Neuf, Porthos from the Rue du Coule, D'Artagnan from the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-'Auxerrois, and Aramis from the Rue de Béthisy.

The first words exchanged between the four friends, precisely n account of the formal manner which each used in their alutations, were rather forced, and the repast itself began with little stiffness. It was apparent that D'Artagnan compelled imself to laugh, Athos to drink, Aramis to relate an anecdote, nd Porthos to be silent. Athos perceived this embarrassment, nd, to apply a prompt remedy, ordered four bottles of cham-agne.

At this order, given with his usual calmness, D'Artagnan's row was seen to clear and Porthos's face to shine.

Aramis was astonished: he knew not only that Athos no onger drank, but that he even experienced a certain repugnance o wine.

This astonishment was redoubled when he saw him pour out bumper and drink it with his old-time gusto. D'Artagnan lled his glass and immediately emptied it. Porthos and .ramis clinked theirs. The four bottles were instantly mptied. It seemed as if they wished to drive away any ormer suspicions.

In one moment this excellent specific had dissipated even he smallest cloud remaining at the bottom of their hearts. 'he four friends began to talk louder, without waiting till one ad finished before the other began, and each to assume at able his own favourite position. Shortly — an unheard-of hing! — Aramis loosened two clasps of his doublet; and, when 'orthos saw it, he unfastened all his.

Their battles, their long journeys, the wounds given and received, formed the first staple of their conversation. Then they passed to the silent and secret struggle sustained against him whom they now called the "great Cardinal."

"Faith," said Aramis, "we have praised the dead quite enough: let us abuse the living a little. I should like to abuse Mazarin a little; is it allowable?"

"Certainly," said D'Artagnan, bursting into laughter, — "certainly; let us have your tale, and I will applaud it if it be a good one."

"A great prince," said Aramis, "with whom Mazarin sought

"'Ah, monseigneur,' cried the second gentleman, 'I understand — you meant to say reproved.'

"'Reprove or cuff,[1] what matters which?' said the Prince; 'is it not the same thing? Really, your word-makers are perfect pedants.'"

They laughed much at this philological mistake, for M. de Beaufort's blunders of this kind were beginning to be proverbial, and it was agreed that since party spirit was banished forever from these friendly meetings, D'Artagnan and Porthos might rally the princes, on condition that Athos and Aramis might cuff (*gourmer*) Mazarin.

"Faith," said D'Artagnan to his two friends, "you are right to wish him ill, for, on his part, I protest to you that Mazarin does not feel friendly toward you."

"What! Really?" said Athos. "If I thought that the rascal knew my name I would be unbaptised, for fear any one should think that I knew him."

"He does not know you by your name, but by your actions. He knows that there are two gentlemen who more especially contributed to M. de Beaufort's escape, and he is making an active search for them, I can assure you."

"Through whom?"

"Through me."

"How through you?"

"Yes, he sent for me again this morning to ask whether I had got any news."

"About those two gentlemen?"

"Yes."

"And what did you say?"

"That I had not any as yet, but was going to dine with two persons who might give me some."

"And you actually told him that?" said Porthos, with his broad grin spread over all his large face. "Bravo! And does not this frighten you, Athos?"

"No," said Athos, "I do not dread Mazarin's investigation."

"You will please," said Aramis, "tell me what you *do* dread."

"Nothing; at least at present."

"And in the past?" asked Porthos.

"Ah, in the past — that is another thing," replied Athos, with a sigh, — "in the past and in the future."

[1] The play of words turns on the distinction between *gourmer*, to cuff, and *gourmander*, to reprove.

ve you any fear for your young Raoul?" inquired

od," said D'Artagnan; "one is never killed in the first

r in the second," said Aramis.
r in the third," said Porthos. "Besides, when one is
one returns to life again. Witness ourselves."
," said Athos, "Raoul does not disquiet me, for he will
, I hope, like a gentleman; and if he is killed — Well,
be bravely. But wait; should that misfortune happen,
hen" —
s passed his hand over his pale brow.
ll, then?" said Aramis.
ll, then I should regard it as an expiation."
!" said D'Artagnan, "I know what you mean."
d so do I," said Aramis. "But we must not think
hat, Athos; the past is past."
o not understand," said Porthos.
e affair at Armentières," said D'Artagnan to him in a
ice.
e affair at Armentières?" he repeated.
lady" —
, yes!" said Porthos; "I had forgotten it."
s looked at him with his penetrating eye.
d had you really forgotten it, Porthos?" he asked.
ith, yes," replied Porthos; "it was a long time ago."
the thing does not weigh on your conscience?"
ith, no," said Porthos.
d on yours, Aramis?"
ay, I sometimes think of it," said Aramis, "as of one
e cases of conscience that admit of discussion."
d you, D'Artagnan?"
ll, I confess that when my mind even dwells on that
time I can think only of poor Madame de Bonacieux's
ld body. Yes, yes," he murmured, "I have many times
ret for the victim, never any remorse for her assassin."
s shook his head with an air of doubt.
nsider," said Aramis, "that if you admit Divine justice,
participation in human affairs, that woman was pun-
by the will of God. We were the instruments — that

t the free will, Aramis?"

"And what does the judge do? He has his free will also, and condemns fearlessly. What does the executioner do? He is the master of his own arm, and yet he strikes without remorse."

"The executioner" — murmured Athos.

And they saw that the word brought up a recollection.

"I know that it is awful," said d'Artagnan; "but when I think that we killed Englishmen, men of La Rochelle, Spaniards, nay, even Frenchmen, who never did us any greater harm than taking aim at us and missing us, — who had never any greater fault than that of crossing swords with us and not being able to parry quick enough, — I excuse myself for my share of that woman's murder, upon my honour I do."

"Now that you have brought it to my recollection, Athos," said Porthos, "I can see the scene as if I were now there. Milady was there, where you now sit [Athos turned pale]. I was where D'Artagnan sits. I had by my side a sword that would cut like a Damascus blade — you must remember it, Aramis, for you called it Balizarde. Well, I swear to you three if the executioner of Béthune — was it Béthune? Yes, faith, it was Béthune — well, if he had not been there I would have cut off the head of that wicked wretch without any consideration — ay, even after consideration. She was a wicked woman."

"And then," said Aramis, in the tone of careless philosophy he had assumed since he had entered the Church, and in which there was much more of atheism than of trust in God, "what is the use of thinking of all this? What is done is done. We shall confess this deed at the last hour; and God will know, better than we can, if it is a crime, a fault, or a meritorious action. Do I repent it? you ask. Faith, I do not. On my honour and by the cross, I repent it only because she was a woman."

"But the greatest comfort in all this is," said D'Artagnan, "that of all that has happened, no trace remains."

"She had a son," said Athos.

"Oh, yes, I know that well enough," said D'Artagnan, "and you have talked to me about him. But who knows what has become of him? The serpent being dead, the brood is also dead! Can you suppose that De Winter, his uncle, will have nourished this young serpent? De Winter will have condemned the son, as he condemned the mother."

"Then," said Athos, "misfortune must befall De Winter, or the child had done no harm."

"The child is dead, or the devil take me," said Porthos. There is so much fog in that horrible country — at least, D'Artagnan declares."

At this very moment, when Porthos's reasoning was perhaps just about to restore some gayety to their faces, which had grown more or less serious, the sound of steps was heard on the staircase, and some one knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Athos.

"Gentlemen," said the landlord, "there is a servant in great haste, who wishes to speak with one of you."

"Which of us?" they all inquired.

"To him who is called the Comte de la Fère."

"I am he," said Athos. "And what is the name of this servant?"

"Grimaud."

"Ah!" said Athos, turning pale; "returned so soon? What can have happened to Bragelonne?"

"Let him come in," said D'Artagnan; "let him come in."

Grimaud had already mounted the stairs, and was waiting on the landing-place. He rushed into the room and dismissed the landlord by a sign.

The landlord shut the door, and the four friends remained in eager expectation. Grimaud's agitation, his pallor, the perspiration that bathed his face, the dust that soiled his dress, all made it evident that he was the messenger of some important and terrible communication.

"Gentlemen," said he, "that woman had a son; the son has become a man. The tigress had a cub; the tiger is loose, he is coming to you; take care!"

Athos looked at his friends with a melancholy smile; Porthos felt at his side for his sword, but it was hanging on the wall; Aramis seized his knife; D'Artagnan rose up.

"What do you mean, Grimaud?" he cried.

"That Milady's son has left England — that he is in France — that he is coming to Paris, if he is not here already."

"The devil!" cried Porthos; "are you sure?"

"Sure," answered Grimaud.

This declaration produced a long silence. Grimaud was so breathless, so exhausted by fatigue, that he fell into a chair.

Athos filled a glass of champagne and carried it to him.

"Well, after all," said D'Artagnan, "even if he should be alive, even if he should come to Paris, we have faced many others — let him come!"

"Yes," said Porthos, looking affectionately at his sword hanging against the wall, "we wait for him; let him come."

"Besides, he is only a boy," said Aramis.

Grimaud rose up.

"A boy! Do you know what this boy has done? Disguised as a monk, he has discovered the whole story by confessing the executioner of Béthune; and after having received his confession — after having learnt everything from him — for absolution he planted this dagger in his breast. There it is, still red and moist, for it is not more than thirty hours since it was drawn from the wound."

And Grimaud threw down on the table the dagger that the monk had left in the wounded man's side.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis arose, and, with a spontaneous movement, secured their swords.

Athos alone remained in his seat, calm and thoughtful.

"And you say that he was dressed like a monk, Grimaud?"

"Yes, like a monk of St. Augustin."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"About my height, so the landlord informed me, thin and pale, with clear blue eyes and light hair."

"And — he did not see Raoul, did he?" inquired Athos.

"On the contrary, they met, and the Viscount himself conducted him to the wounded man's bed."

Athos arose without saying a word, and in his turn went and took down his sword from the wall.

"Ah, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, endeavouring to laugh, "do you know that we look very much like a parcel of young girls? We four men, who have bearded armies without winking, we are actually trembling before a young boy!"

"Yes," replied Athos, "but this boy comes in the name of God."

And they hastily left the tavern.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LETTER OF CHARLES THE FIRST.

THE reader must now cross the Seine with us, and accompany us to the gate of the Carmelite convent in the Rue Saint Jacques.

It is eleven o'clock in the morning, and the holy sisters have just said a mass for the success of Charles the First's arms. On leaving the church, a woman and a young girl, clothed in black, the one like a widow, the other like an orphan, have returned to their cell.

The woman is kneeling on a footstool of painted wood, and a few paces from her stands the young girl, leaning against a chair and weeping.

The woman must have been beautiful, but it is evident that her tears have prematurely aged her. The young girl is charming, and her tears add to her charms. The woman appears to be about forty years old; the young girl is fourteen.

"My God!" the kneeling suppliant was saying, "preserve my husband, preserve my son, and take my life, so sad and so miserable!"

"My God!" said the young girl, "preserve my mother!"

"Your mother can do nothing more for you in this world, Henrietta," said the afflicted woman; "your mother has no longer either throne, or husband, or son, or money, or friends; your mother, my poor girl, is forsaken by the whole world."

And the woman, throwing herself into her daughter's arms, gave way to a paroxysm of sobs.

"Take courage, my dear mother," said the young girl.

"Ah! kings are unfortunate this year," said the mother, resting her head on her daughter's shoulder, "and no one thinks of us in this country, for every one is thinking of his own affairs. While your brother was with us, he sustained me; but he is gone, and can now send no news of himself, neither to his father or to me. I have pledged my last jewels, I have sold all my clothes and yours to pay the wages of his servants, who refused to accompany him until I made that sacrifice. Now we are compelled to live at the expense of these holy sisters; we are God's poor pensioners!"

"But why do you not apply to the Queen, your sister?" demanded the young girl.

"Alas!" said the afflicted woman, "the Queen, my sister, is no longer queen, my child: another reigns in her name. Some day you will be able to understand all this."

"Well, then, to the King, your nephew. Will you let me speak to him? You know that he loves me, mother."

"Alas! the King, my nephew, is not yet king; and he himself — you know very well that Laporte has told us so a hundred times — he himself is in want of everything."

"Then let us call upon God!" said the young girl.

And she knelt down beside her mother.

These two women who were thus praying side by side were the daughter and granddaughter of Henry IV., the wife and daughter of Charles I.

They were finishing their prayer, when a nun knocked gently at the door of the cell.

"Come in, my sister," said the elder of the two women, wiping her tears and rising from her knees.

The nun respectfully opened the door.

"I hope that your Majesty will pardon this interruption of your meditations," said she, "but a foreign gentleman is in the parlour who has just arrived from England, and who requests the honour of presenting a letter to your Majesty."

"Oh! a letter from the King perhaps; some news from your father, doubtless; do you hear, Henrietta?"

"Yes, madame, I hear and I hope."

"And who is this gentleman?"

"A gentleman from forty-five to fifty years of age."

"His name? Did he give his name?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the Queen; "my husband's friend! Oh, let him come in, let him come in."

And the Queen ran to meet the messenger, whose hand she eagerly seized.

Lord de Winter, on entering the cell, knelt and presented the letter, enclosed in a gold case.

"Ah, my Lord," said the Queen, "you bring us three things which we have not seen for a long time — gold, a devoted friend, and a letter from our husband and King."

De Winter again bowed; he was so deeply affected that he could not speak.

"My Lord," said the Queen, pointing to the letter, "you may imagine that I am most anxious to know the contents of this paper."

"I will retire, madame," said De Winter.

"No, remain," said the Queen; "we will read it in your presence. Do you not understand that I have a thousand questions to put to you?"

De Winter retired a step or two and remained silent.

The mother and daughter had retired into an embrasure of the window, and were reading most eagerly, the daughter leaning on her mother's arm, the following letter:

"*Madame and dear Wife:*

"*At length we have reached the end. All the resources which God left me are concentrated in the camp at Naseby, whence I write to you in haste. Here I await the army of my rebellious subjects, and I am going to contend once more against them. If I conquer, I shall continue the struggle; if I am conquered, I am completely ruined. I wish, under the latter circumstances (alas! when one is where we are everything must be provided for) — I wish to attempt to gain the coast of France. But can they, or would they, receive an unfortunate King, who will carry such a deleterious example into a country already torn by civil dissensions? Your prudence and affection will be my best guides. The bearer of this letter will tell you, madame, what I dare not trust to the chance of accident; he will tell you what I expect from you. I also charge him with my blessing to my children, and every sentiment of affection for yourself, madame and dear wife.*"

The letter was signed, instead of "*Charles, King*," "*Charles, as yet King.*"

This melancholy perusal, the effect of which De Winter watched on the Queen's countenance, nevertheless brought back to her eyes a beam of hope.

"Let him be no longer King!" she exclaimed; "let him be vanquished, banished, and proscribed — only let him live! Alas! the throne is in these times too perilous a post for me to wish him to retain it. But tell me, my Lord," continued the Queen, "conceal nothing from me — where is the King? Is his situation as desperate as he imagines?"

"Alas! madame, more desperate than he himself imagines. His Majesty has such a good heart that he cannot conceive

hatred; so sincere that he does not suspect treachery. England is seized by a spirit of madness which I much fear will be extinguished only in blood."

"But Lord Montrose," replied the Queen: "I heard of his great and rapid successes — of battles gained at Inverlochy, Auldearn, Alford, and Kilsyth; I heard it reported that he was marching on the frontier to join the King."

"Yes, madame, but at the frontier he met Leslie. He had wearied victory by his superhuman enterprises, and victory deserted him. Montrose, beaten at Philipshaugh, was forced to disband the remnants of his army, and fly, disguised as a valet. He is at Bergen, in Norway."

"And may God preserve him!" said the Queen; "it is at least a consolation to know that those who have so often risked their lives for us are in safety. And now, my Lord, that I see the King's position as it is, that is to say, his desperate position, tell me what you have to say to me from my royal husband."

"Well then, madame, the King wishes you to endeavour to sound the feelings of the King and Queen toward him."

"Alas! you know them," replied the Queen. "The King is as yet only a child; and the Queen is a woman, and a weak one too. M. Mazarin is everything."

"Why, would he play in France the character that Cromwell is playing in England?"

"Oh, no! He is a cunning and crafty Italian, who perhaps dreams of crime, but will never have the courage to execute it; and, exactly contrary to Cromwell, who manages the two Houses of Parliament, Mazarin has only the Queen's support in his struggle with the Parliament."

"That is another reason why he should protect a King persecuted by Parliament."

The Queen shook her head bitterly.

"If I am to form my opinion of him from his conduct to myself, my Lord," said she, "the Cardinal will do nothing, or, perhaps, will even oppose us. My presence and that of my daughter, in France, are already a burden to him; much more, consequently, would be the King's. My Lord," added the Queen, with a melancholy smile, "it is sad and almost disgraceful to confess, but we have passed the winter at the Louvre without money, without linen, almost without bread, and often not leaving our beds for want of fuel!"

"Horrible!" exclaimed De Winter; "the daughter of Henry

— the wife of Charles I.! Why did you not apply, lame, to the first of us who happened to come?"
See the hospitality afforded a Queen, by the minister m a King now wishes to ask for hospitality!"
But I heard a report of a marriage between the Prince of les and Mademoiselle d'Orléans," said De Winter.
Yes, I had hopes of it for a short time. The children d each other; but the Queen, who at first promoted the ch, changed her opinion; and M. le duc d'Orléans, who at encouraged the connection, forbade his daughter to think more of the union. Ah! my Lord," continued the Queen, iout endeavouring to wipe away her tears, "it is far better ontend, as the King has done, and to die, as he perhaps is it to do, than to live the mendicant I am!"
Courage, madame," said De Winter — "courage! Do not pair. It is for the interest of the French Crown, so shaken his moment, to oppose rebellion among a people its nearest hbour. Mazarin is a statesman, and he will understand this ssity."
But are you sure," said the Queen, with an air of doubt, at you have not been anticipated?"
By whom?" demanded De Winter.
By the Joyces, Prides, and Cromwells."
By a tailor, a carman, and a brewer! Ah! I hope, madame, the Cardinal would never enter into an alliance with such as those."
What is he himself?" demanded the Queen.
But for the King's honour — for the Queen's" —
Come, let us hope that he will do something for that our," said Queen Henrietta; "your friendship is so elo- nt, my Lord, that you encourage me. Give me your hand, , and let us go to the minister."
Madame," said De Winter, bowing, "I am overwhelmed uch an honour."
But, after all, should he refuse," said the Queen, stopping t; "and should the King lose the battle?"
His Majesty would then take refuge in Holland, where I e heard that the Prince of Wales now is."
And could his Majesty reckon on many such followers as rself in his flight?"
Alas, no, madame!" replied De Winter; "but the case is ided for, and I am come to seek allies in France."

"Allies!" ejaculated the Queen, shaking her head.

"Madame," replied De Winter, "let me but find some old friends that I had formerly, and I answer for everything."

"Come, then," said the Queen, with that painful doubt which always assails persons who have been long unfortunate, — "come, then, and may God assist you!"

The Queen entered her carriage, and De Winter on horseback, followed by two servants, rode by its side.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CROMWELL'S LETTER.

At the very moment when Queen Henrietta was leaving the Carmelite convent to proceed to the Palais Royal, a cavalier dismounted from his horse at the gate of this regal abode, and announced to the Guards that he had tidings of importance to communicate to Cardinal Mazarin.

Although the Cardinal was often timid, yet, as he still oftener had need of advice and information, he was quite accessible. At the first door the real difficulty was not found, even the second was easily passed; but at the third, besides the Guards and ushers, the faithful Bernouin kept watch — a Cerberus whom no word could soften, no branch, were it even of gold, could charm.

So any one who asked or demanded an audience was obliged at the third door to submit to a formal examination.

The cavalier, having left his horse fastened to the bars of the gate in the courtyard, mounted the great staircase, and addressing the Guards in the first room: "M. le Cardinal Mazarin?" said he.

"Go forward," replied the Guards, without elevating their noses from their cards or dice, and delighted, moreover, to show that it was not their business to act as lacqueys.

The cavalier entered the second room. This was guarded by Musketeers and ushers. He repeated his demand.

"Have you a letter?" asked an usher, going up to the applicant.

"I have one, but not from Cardinal Mazarin."

"Go in and ask for M. Bernouin," said the usher. And he opened the door of the third chamber.

Either by chance, or because it was his usual post, Bernouin was standing behind this door, and had overheard everything.

"I am the man, sir, that you seek," said he; "from whom is the letter that you bring for his Eminence?"

"From General Oliver Cromwell," replied the stranger; "will you announce me to his Eminence, and inform me whether he will receive me or not?"

And he remained standing, in the gloomy and severe manner that was peculiar to the Puritans..

Bernouin, after having cast a scrutinising glance over the young man, entered the Cardinal's cabinet and delivered the envoy's message.

"A man who is the bearer of a letter from Oliver Cromwell?" said Mazarin; "and what kind of man?"

"A typical Englishman, monsignor, with hair a lightish red, more red than light; eye a greyish blue, more grey than blue; and, to sum up all, pride and formality."

"Let him give you his letter."

"Monsignor asks the letter," said Bernouin, returning from the cabinet to the antechamber.

"Monsignor is not to see the letter without the bearer," replied the young man; "but, to convince you that I am really the bearer of a letter, see, there it is."

Bernouin looked at the seal, and seeing that the letter came from General Oliver Cromwell, he turned to go back to Mazarin.

"Add," said the young man, "that I am not a mere messenger, but an envoy extraordinary."

Bernouin reëntered the cabinet, and returning in a few minutes, he said, as he held the door open:

"Enter, sir."

Mazarin had required all these comings and goings to recover himself from the emotion which the announcement of this letter had caused; but acute as his intellect was, he in vain sought for the motive which had induced Cromwell to enter into communication with him.

The young man appeared at the door of the cabinet, holding his hat in one hand and the letter in the other.

Mazarin rose up.

"You have credentials for me, sir," said he.

"Here they are, monsignor," replied the young man.

Mazarin took the letter, unsealed it, and read:

"M. Mordaunt, one of my secretaries, will deliver this letter of introduction to his Eminence Cardinal Mazarin, at Paris. He is the bearer of a second confidential letter for his Eminence."

"Very well, Monsieur Mordaunt," said Mazarin; "give me the second letter, and sit down."

The young man drew a second letter from his pocket, presented it to the Cardinal, and sat down.

In the meantime the Cardinal, still busied with his reflections, had taken the letter, and, without unsealing it, was turning it over and over in his hand; but, to put the messenger on the wrong scent, he began to question him in his usual manner, being convinced from experience that few men could conceal anything from him, when he questioned them and looked at them at the same time.

"You are very young, Monsieur Mordaunt," said he, "for the rough office of ambassador, where the oldest diplomats often fail."

"Monsignor, I am twenty-three years old; but your Eminence is mistaken in calling me young. I am older than you are, although I have not your wisdom."

"How is that, sir?" said Mazarin; "I do not comprehend you."

"I say, monsignor, that years of suffering count double; and that I have had twenty years of suffering."

"Ah, yes, I understand," said Mazarin: "lack of fortune—you are poor, are you not?" Then he added to himself, "These English revolutionists are all beggars and clowns."

"Monsignor, I ought to have, some day, a fortune of six millions; but it has been taken from me."

"You are not, therefore, a man of low rank," said Mazarin, in astonishment.

"If I bore my title, I should be a lord; if I went by my real name, you would hear one of the most illustrious that England can boast of."

"Why, what is your name?"

"My name is Mordaunt," said the young man, bowing.

Mazarin saw that Cromwell's envoy wished to preserve his incognito.

He was silent for a moment, but during that moment he had looked at him more earnestly than before.

The young man was perfectly immovable.

"The devil take these Puritans!" said Mazarin, in a low voice; "they are cut out of marble."

Then he added aloud:

"But you have relatives?"

"Yes, I have one, monsignor."

"Then he assists you?"

"I went three times to implore his protection, and three times he made his valets drive me away."

"Oh, mon Dieu! my dear Monsieur Mordaunt," said Mazarin, hoping to deceive the young man by his feigned commiseration. "Mon Dieu! your story much interests me. You are, therefore, ignorant of your birth?"

"I have learnt it only very recently."

"And up to the moment when you found it out"—

"I considered myself a foundling."

"Then you never saw your mother?"

"Yes, monsignor; when I was a child, she came three times to my nurse's house. I remember the last time that she came, as if it had been yesterday."

"You have a good memory," said Mazarin.

"Oh, yes, monsignor," said the young man, in such a singular tone that the Cardinal felt himself shudder.

"And who brought you up?" inquired Mazarin.

"A French nurse, who turned me off when I was five years old, because no one paid her any longer; but she confided to me the name of that relative, of whom my mother had often spoken to her."

"What then became of you?"

"As I was crying and begging on the highway, a minister at Kingston took me in; educated me in the Calvinistic religion; gave me all the knowledge he himself possessed, and assisted me in my search for my family."

"And this search?"

"Was fruitless; chance did everything for me."

"You discovered what had become of your mother?"

"I learnt that she had been murdered by this relative, assisted by four of his friends. But I had already learnt that I had been degraded from my rank, and robbed of all my property by Charles I."

"Ah! now I understand why you serve M. Cromwell. Yo hate the King!"

"Yes, monsignor, I hate him!" replied the young man.

Mazarin observed with astonishment the diabolical expres sion with which the young man uttered these words. A ordinary faces colour with blood, so his face was tinted wit bile, and became livid.

"Your story is terrible, Monsieur Mordaunt, and touche me deeply; but, happily for you, you serve a powerful maste He, no doubt, will aid you in your search. Men of our stam know so many things."

"Monsignor, to a well-bred dog it is only necessary to poin out one end of a track, and he will be sure to arrive at th other."

"But would you wish me to speak to this relative whom yo have mentioned?" asked Mazarin, who was glad of th chance to secure a friend near Cromwell.

"Thanks, monsignor; I shall speak to him myself."

"But did you not say that he had treated you ill?"

"He will treat me better the next time I see him."

"Have you some means of softening him?"

"I have the means of making him fear me."

Mazarin looked at the young man; but perceiving the fir that flashed from his eyes, he lowered his head; and feelin some embarrassment in continuing the conversation, he opene Cromwell's letter.

The young man's eyes gradually became dull and glassy a usual, and he fell into profound thought. After having rea the first lines, Mazarin ventured to look if Mordaunt was no watching his countenance; and observing his indifference:

"Have your work done," said he, almost imperceptibl shrugging his shoulders, "by men who are at the same tim doing their own! Let us see what this letter contains."

We give it literally:

"*To his Eminence Monsignor the Cardinal Mazarini:*

"*I am very desirous, monsignor, of knowing your views touchin the present state of affairs in England. The two kingdoms are s close to each other that they must unavoidably occupy themselve with each other's situation. The English are almost unanimou in their opposition to the tyranny of Charles and his followers Placed at the head of this movement by the public trust, I can estimate its true nature and consequences more correctly than*

ny other person. At this very time I am engaged in war, and am about to fight a decisive battle with King Charles. I shall ain it; for the hopes of the nation and the spirit of the Lord re with me. This battle gained, the King has no further re-ources in England or in Scotland; and should he not be taken r killed, he will endeavour to pass over to France, to recruit oldiers, and to obtain a reënforcement of arms and money. 'rance has already received Queen Henrietta, and, unintention-lly no doubt, has cherished a brand of inextinguishable civil ar in my country. But Queen Henrietta is a daughter of 'rance, and the hospitality of France was her due. As to King 'harles, the question is quite different: in receiving and aiding im, France would condemn the actions of the people of Eng-nd, and so essentially injure England herself, and more par-cularly the progress of that Government which she hopes to tablish, that such conduct would be equivalent to an open dec-ration of hostilities."

At this moment Mazarin, much annoyed at the turn the tter was taking, again left off reading and cast a cautious lance at the young man.

He was still thinking.

Mazarin continued:

"It is therefore urgent that I should know immediately, onsignor, what are the views of France. The interests of that ingdom and those of England, although apparently tending in n opposite direction, are really more united than any one might ink. England has need of internal tranquillity to complete e expulsion of her King; France has need of the same tran-illity to establish the throne of her young monarch. You, as ell as ourselves, require that internal peace which we, thanks the energy of our Government, have almost acquired.

"Your disputes with the Parliament — your violent dissen-ons with the princes, who one day fight for and the next day ainst you — the popular obstinacy, directed by the coadjutor, e president Blancmesnil, and the councillor Broussel — in ne, all that disorder which pervades the different ranks in the tate must make you look forward with doubt to the effect of a reign war. For then England, in the highest state of excite-ent from her revolutionary principles, would join herself with pain, who already desires the alliance. So I thought, monsi-eur, — knowing your wisdom and the personal interest you have the present circumstances, — I thought that you would prefer

concentrating your strength in the internal affairs of France, and leaving England to attend to its new Government. This neutrality simply consists in excluding King Charles from the French territory, and in not assisting, by arms, money, or troops, that King who is entirely a foreigner to your country.

"My letter is therefore entirely confidential; and it is on that account that I send it by one whom I can so strictly trust. From a feeling which your Eminence can estimate, it will precede the measures which I shall take after the events. Oliver Cromwell has thought that he would do much better to reason with a mind so intelligent as Mazarini's than with a Queen who, although she is certainly to be admired for her firmness, must be far too much influenced by the prejudices of birth and divine right.

"Adieu, monsignor. If I receive no answer in a fortnight, I shall consider my letter as null and void.

"Oliver Cromwell."

"Monsieur Mordaunt," said the Cardinal, raising his voice so as to rouse the thinker, "my answer to this letter will be the more satisfactory to General Cromwell the more convinced I am that it is unknown that I have written it. Therefore go, and wait for it at Boulogne-sur-Mer; and promise me that you will leave Paris to-morrow morning."

"I promise you that I will, monsignor," replied Mordaunt; "but how many days will your Eminence make me wait for the answer?"

"If you have not received it in ten days, you may leave the country."

Mordaunt bowed.

"That is not all, sir," continued Mazarin; "your own personal adventures have deeply touched me. Besides, M. Cromwell's letter gives you importance in my eyes as an ambassador. Tell me, then, what can I do for you?"

Mordaunt reflected an instant, and after evident hesitation he was just opening his mouth to speak, when Bernouin entered hastily, leant down to the Cardinal's ear, and said in a low voice:

"Monsignor, Queen Henrietta, accompanied by an English gentleman, is this moment entering the Palais Royal."

Mazarin gave a start in his chair, which did not escape the young man's notice, and doubtless checked the confidence he was about to repose.

"Sir," said the Cardinal, "you understood me, did you not?"

I appoint Boulogne, because I imagine that any French town is the same to you. Should you prefer another, only name it; but you can easily conceive that, surrounded as I am by influences which I can only escape by the exercise of great discretion, I must be anxious that your presence in Paris should not be known."

"I will depart, sir," said Mordaunt, starting toward the door by which he had entered.

"Not that way, sir, I beseech you," said the Cardinal, with great eagerness. "Will you pass through the gallery, from which you can gain the hall? I am anxious that you should not be seen leaving me; our interview ought to be secret."

Mordaunt followed Bernouin, who led him into an adjoining room and delivered him over to an usher, indicating the door by which he was to go out.

Then he hastily returned to his master to introduce Queen Henrietta, who was already passing through the glass gallery.

CHAPTER XL.

MAZARIN AND QUEEN HENRIETTA.

THE Cardinal arose and went hastily to receive the Queen of England. He met her in the middle of the gallery that led to his cabinet.

He paid the more respect to this Queen, unattended and unadorned, because he felt that he had something wherewith to reproach himself on the score of his avarice and want of feeling.

But suppliants learn to school their countenance to assume every kind of expression; and the daughter of Henry IV. smiled on meeting him whom she despised and hated.

"Ah!" said Mazarin to himself, "what a sweet face! Can she be come to borrow money from me?"

And he cast an anxious glance at the lock of his strong box; he even turned inward the bezel of the magnificent diamond, the brilliancy of which attracted the eye to his hand, which was white and handsome. Unfortunately this ring had not the property of that of Gyges, which rendered its master invisible when he did what Mazarin had just done.

Mazarin pretended not to understand the double meaning of the sentence he had himself uttered, and continued to lament over the lot of Concino Concini.

"But after all, my Lord Cardinal," said the Queen, quite out of patience, "what answer do you give me?"

"Madame," exclaimed the Cardinal, more and more affected, "madame, your Majesty would permit me to give you a piece of advice? At the same time bear in mind, before I venture on such audacity, that I throw myself at your feet, as the humblest and most devoted of your servants for all your commands."

"Speak, sir," said the Queen; "the advice of such a prudent man as yourself must always be valuable."

"Madame, believe me, the King ought to defend himself to the last extremity."

"He has done so, sir; and this last battle, which he is about to fight, with resources far inferior to those of his enemies, proves that he does not yield without a struggle. But should he, after all, be vanquished?"

"Well, then, madame, in that case, my advice — I know that I am very bold to give advice to your Majesty — but my advice is that the King should not leave his realm. Absent kings are soon forgotten. If he should come to France, his cause is lost."

"But then," said the Queen, "if that be your advice, and you are really interested for him, send him some assistance in men and money, for I can do no more for him; I have sold even my last diamond to aid him. I have actually nothing left; you know it yourself, you know it better than any one else, sir. If any ornament had been left, I should have bought fuel to warm myself and my daughter this winter."

"Ah, madame," said Mazarin, "your Majesty is not aware of what you request. From the very day when foreign aid is given to a king to replace him on his throne he confesses that he no longer depends on the love of his subjects."

"To the point, Monsieur le Cardinal," said the Queen, wearied at following that subtle mind into the labyrinth of words in which he was losing himself; "to the point, and say Yes or No. If the King persists in remaining in England, will you send him assistance? Should he come to France, will you grant him hospitality?"

"Madame," answered the Cardinal, affecting the greatest

frankness, "I will prove to your Majesty, I hope, how completely I am devoted to you, and what a great desire I have to terminate an affair which your Majesty takes so much to heart; after which, I hope that your Majesty will no longer doubt my zeal in your service."

The Queen bit her lips and moved impatiently on her chair. "Well, then, what will you do?" said she; "come, let us see."

"I will instantly go and consult the Queen on this question, and we will then lay the matter before the Parliament."

"With which you are now at variance, are you not? You will depute Broussel to bring it forward. That is quite enough, Monsieur le Cardinal, quite enough. I understand you; or, rather, I am wrong. Go to the Parliament; for from that Parliament, the enemy of kings, the only relief that prevented her dying of cold and hunger this winter has come to the daughter of that great, that sublime Henry you so much admire."

And with these words the Queen rose from her seat with majestic indignation.

The Cardinal held out his clasped hands to her.

"Ah, madame, madame, how ill you understand me, mon Dieu!"

But Queen Henrietta, without even turning toward him who was there shedding those hypocritical tears, crossing the cabinet, opened the door herself, and, in the midst of his Eminence's numerous guards, of courtiers eager to pay their respects to him, of the magnificence of a rival royalty, went and took the arm of Lord de Winter, who was standing alone and unnoticed. Poor Queen! already fallen from her high estate! all still made her their obeisance; but now she had, in fact, only one arm on which she could lean.

"Never mind," said Mazarin, when he was left alone; "this has given me pain; it is but a rough part to play; but I have said nothing, either to the one party or the other. Hum! that Cromwell is but an uncouth king-hunter. I pity his ministers, if he should ever have any. Bernouin!"

Bernouin entered.

"Inquire if that young man whom you introduced, in a lark-coloured doublet and with short hair, is still in the palace."

Bernouin left the room. The Cardinal occupied the time of his absence in turning outward the bezel of his ring, in rubbing

the diamond, and in admiring its water; and as a tear was still swimming in his eye and dimmed his vision, he shook his head to get rid of it.

Bernouin returned with Comminges, who was on guard.

"Monsignor," said Comminges, "as I was conducting the young man your Eminence inquires for, he went up to the glass door of the gallery, and looked at something with great astonishment; without doubt, it was Raphael's beautiful picture, which is opposite that door. Afterward he appeared to meditate a moment, and then descended the staircase. I think I saw him mount a grey horse and leave the courtyard of the palace. But is not monsignor going to the Queen?"

"For what?"

"M. de Guitaut, my uncle, has just informed me that her Majesty has received news from the army."

"Very well; I will go directly."

At this moment M. Villequier appeared; he came, indeed, from the Queen, in search of the Cardinal.

Comminges was right: Mordaunt had really acted as he said. In passing through the gallery parallel to the glassed-in gallery, he had perceived De Winter, who was waiting for Queen Henrietta to finish her negotiations.

At this sight the young man stopped short, not in admiration of Raphael's picture, but as if fascinated by the appearance of a horrible object. His eyes dilated, a shudder ran through his whole body; one would have said that he wished to break through the barrier of glass that separated him from his enemy; for if Comminges had seen the expression of hatred that shone in the young man's eyes on looking at De Winter, he would not have doubted for an instant that that English gentleman was his mortal enemy.

But Mordaunt paused.

It was doubtless for the purpose of considering, for instead of allowing himself to be carried away by the first impulse, which had urged him to go directly to Lord de Winter, he slowly descended the staircase, left the palace with head depressed, got into his saddle, stationed his horse at the corner of the Rue Richelieu, and, with his eyes fixed on the gate, waited till the Queen's carriage should issue from the courtyard.

He had not long to wait, for the Queen remained scarcely a quarter of an hour with Mazarin; but this quarter of an hour appeared an age to him who was waiting.

last the heavy machine which was then called a coach
ed through the gates; and De Winter, again on horse-
leant forward toward the door to converse with her
ty.
horses set off at a trot, and took the way to the Louvre,
they entered. Before she left the Carmelite convent,
Henrietta had told her daughter to wait for her at the
which she had long inhabited, and which she had left
because her poverty appeared even more oppressive in
saloons.
daunt followed the carriage; and when he saw it enter
loomy arch, he took his station against a shaded wall,
emained motionless in the midst of the mouldings of
Goujon, like a bas-relief representing an equestrian

e again he waited, as he had before done at the Palais

CHAPTER XLI.

W THE UNFORTUNATE SOMETIMES TAKE CHANCE FOR PROVIDENCE.

ELL, madame?" said Lord de Winter, when the Queen
ismissed her attendants.
ell, what I foresaw has happened, my Lord."
e refuses?"
id I not tell you so before we went?"
ne Cardinal refuses to receive the King? France refuses
ality to an unfortunate prince? But it is the first time
thing has happened, madame."
did not say France, my Lord, I said the Cardinal; and
ardinal is not even a Frenchman."
at did you see the Queen?"
is useless," replied Henrietta, shaking her head sor-
ly; "the Queen will never say Yes when the Cardinal
id No. Do you not know that this Italian manages
hing, domestic as well as foreign? And more than that,
turning to what I said to you before, I should not be
sed if we had been anticipated by Cromwell. He was
rassed when he spoke to me, and yet firm in his deter-

mination to refuse. Then, did you observe the comn there was in the Palais Royal, the constant running ab busy men? Can they have received any news, my Lord

"Not from England, madame. I used so much despatc I am sure I have not been anticipated. I left only thre ago; I passed through the army of the Puritans as if miracle; I took post with my lacquey, Tony; and the which we now ride I bought at Paris. Besides, bef risks anything, I am certain that the King will wait for Majesty's answer."

"You will tell him, my Lord," replied the Queen, in de "that I am powerless; that I have suffered as much as h nay, more, constrained as I am to eat the bread of an and to beg hospitality from false friends who deride my and that as to his own royal person, it behooves him to fice it generously, and to die like a king. I will go ar with him."

"Madame, madame," cried De Winter, "your Majesty ing yourself up to despondency; perhaps some hope is le

"No more friends, no more friends in the whole worl Lord, than yourself. Oh, my God, my God!" exclaimed rietta, raising her eyes to heaven, "hast Thou removed the earth all the generous hearts that once existed c earth?"

"I hope not, madame," said De Winter, ponderin spoke to you of four men."

"And what can you do with four men?"

"Four devoted men, four men resolved to die, can do a deal, believe me, madame; and those of whom I spoke great deal once."

"And where are these four men?"

"Ah! that I do not know. For nearly twenty years I lost sight of them; and yet whenever I have seen the K danger, I have thought of them."

"Were these men, then, your friends?"

"One of the men had my life in his power and gave I do not know whether he has remained my friend; but that time I have remained his."

"And are these men in France, my Lord?"

"I believe so."

"Tell me their names; perhaps I may have heard *mentioned,* and might assist you in your inquiry."

"One of them was called the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Oh, my Lord, if I am not mistaken, this Chevalier d'Artagnan is now a lieutenant in the Guards. I have heard his name mentioned; but observe that this man is, I fear, a devoted Cardinalist."

"In that case it would be a last misfortune," said De Winter, "and I should begin to think that Fate is really against us."

"But the others," said the Queen, who clung to this last hope as a shipwrecked mariner does to the last remnants of his vessel, — "the others, my Lord!"

"The name of the second I heard by chance — for, before fighting us, these four gentlemen gave us their names — the second was called the Comte de la Fère. As for the two others, the custom that I fell into of calling them by their borrowed names has caused me to forget their real ones."

"Oh, mon Dieu! it would be of great consequence to find them," said the Queen, "since you imagine that these excellent men might be so useful to the King."

"Oh, yes," said De Winter. "For they are the very ones. Listen, madame, and try to remember. Did you never hear that Queen Anne of Austria was formerly saved from perhaps the greatest danger that a queen ever encountered?"

"Yes, at the period of her amours with the Duke of Buckingham; but I don't know the circumstances. It was something about some diamond studs."

"Yes, madame, that is it; and those men saved her. It grieves me to think that if the names of those gentlemen are not known to you it is because the Queen has forgotten them, when she ought to have made them the first gentlemen in her realm."

"Well, my Lord, we must look for them. But what can four men do, or rather three; for I tell you that you must not reckon on M. d'Artagnan."

"He would be one valiant sword the less, madame; but there would still be three others, without reckoning mine. Now, four devoted men surrounding the King, to guard him from his enemies, to encircle him in battle, to aid him with their counsel, to escort him in his flight, would be sufficient not to render him victorious, but to save him if vanquished, to aid him in crossing the sea; and whatever Mazarin may say, your royal husband, once on the shores of France, would there

find as many retreats and asylums as the seag-ull in storm."

"Look, then; try to find these gentlemen, my Lord; an should you find them, should they consent to pass over int England with you, on the day that we remount the throne will give to each of them a duchy, and, besides that, as muc gold as would pay for the Palace of Whitehall. So try to fin them, my Lord, I beseech you!"

"I would, madame," replied De Winter, "and I should ce tainly find them, but time is lacking. Does your Majesty forg that the King is waiting for his answer, and is waiting in dee anxiety?"

"Then we are lost!" exclaimed the Queen, in a broke hearted tone.

At this moment the door opened, the young Henriett appeared, and the Queen, with that sublime power over he self which constitutes maternal heroism, restrained her tear at the same time making a sign to De Winter to change th conversation.

But this sudden reaction, well managed though it was, di not deceive the young Princess; she stopped on the threshold heaved a sigh, and, addressing the Queen:

"Why are you always weeping when I am not with you mother?" said she.

The Queen smiled, and, instead of answering her:

"There, De Winter," said she, "I have at any rate gaine one thing by being only half a queen, which is, that my chil dren call me mother instead of madame."

Then turning toward her daughter:

"What do you want, Henrietta?" she continued.

"Mother," said the young Princess, "a cavalier has jus entered the Louvre, and requests the liberty of paying hi respects to your Majesty. He is just come from the army and says that he has a letter for you, from Marshal de Gram mont, I believe."

"Ah!" said the Queen to De Winter, "he is one of m faithful friends. But do you not observe, my dear Lord, tha we are so badly served that my daughter is compelled to per form the office of an usher."

"Madame," said De Winter, "have pity on me, you breal my heart."

"And who is this cavalier, Henrietta?" said the Queen.

"I saw him from the window, madame; he is a young man, who seems to be scarcely sixteen years old, and is called the Vicomte de Bragelonne."

The Queen smiled and nodded. The young Princess opened the door, and Raoul made his appearance.

He took three steps toward the Queen, and knelt down.

"Madame," said he, "I am the bearer of a letter from my friend, the M. le Comte de Guiche, who tells me that he has the honour to be one of your servitors. This letter contains important news and the expression of his respects."

On hearing the name of the Comte de Guiche, a colour spread over the young Princess's cheeks. The Queen looked at her with some severity.

"You said the letter was from Marshal de Grammont, Henrietta," said the Queen.

"I thought so," stammered the young girl.

"It is my fault, madame," interposed Raoul; "in fact, I announced myself as having come from Marshal de Grammont; but he cannot write, being wounded in the right arm, and the Comte de Guiche acted as his secretary."

"Then there has been a battle?" said the Queen, making a sign to Raoul to rise.

"Yes, madame," replied the young man, delivering the letter to Lord de Winter, who came forward to receive it and handed it to the Queen.

At this declaration that a battle had been fought, the young Princess opened her lips to ask a question which no doubt interested her, but she closed them without uttering a word, while the roses gradually vanished from her cheeks.

The Queen observed all these emotions, and doubtless her maternal heart interpreted them correctly; for, again addressing Raoul:

"I hope that no harm has befallen the young Comte de Guiche," said she; "for not only is he one of our servitors, as he has told you, but one of our friends."

"No, madame," replied Raoul; "on the contrary, he has this day acquired great glory, and has had the honour of being embraced by the Prince on the battle-field."

The young Princess clapped her hands; but quite ashamed of being betrayed by her feelings into such a demonstration of joy, she half turned away and leaned down to a vase of roses, pretending to smell them.

"Let us see what the Count says," said the Queen.

"I have had the honour of telling your Majesty that h wrote in his father's name."

"Yes, sir."

The Queen unsealed the letter and read:

"*Madame and Queen:*

"*Being unable to have the honour of writing to you myse on account of a wound in my right hand, I avail myself of th services of my son, M. le Comte de Guiche (whom you know be as true a servant to your Majesty as his father), to inform you that we have just gained the battle of Lens, and that th victory cannot fail greatly to increase the power of the Cardin and the Queen in the affairs of Europe. Therefore, if yo Majesty will follow my advice, you will take advantage of th moment to lay the claims of your august husband to favo before the King's Government. M. le Vicomte de Bragelonn who will have the honour of delivering this letter, is my son friend, to whom, indeed, he in all probability is indebted for h life. He is a gentleman in whom your Majesty may entirel confide, should you have any verbal or written message to sen to me.*

"*I have the honour to be, with respect, etc.,*

"*Maréchal de Grammont.*"

At the moment when the service he had rendered the Cou was mentioned, Raoul had not been able to help turning h head toward the young Princess, and he had then seen a expression of infinite gratitude to him beaming from her eye He had no longer any doubt: the daughter of Charles I. love his friend.

"The battle of Lens won!" said the Queen. "They a fortunate here: they win battles. Yes, Marshal de Grammo is right: this will change the aspect of affairs; but I muc fear that it will do nothing for ours, if, indeed, it does n injure them. This news is very recent, sir," continued t Queen, "and I am greatly obliged by your having used suc despatch in conveying it to me. Had it not been for you, f this letter, I should not have heard of it until to-morrow, perhaps the day after to-morrow. I should have been the la person in Paris to hear it."

"Madame," said Raoul, "the Louvre is the second palace which this news has come; it is unknown elsewhere, and

swore to M. le Comte de Guiche that I would deliver this letter to your Majesty even before I had embraced my guardian."

"And is your guardian a Bragelonne like yourself?" asked Lord de Winter. "I formerly knew a Bragelonne; does he still live?"

"No, sir, he is dead, and my guardian, with whom he was closely connected, I believe, inherited from him that property the title of which I bear."

"And your guardian, sir," said the Queen, who could not help feeling an interest in this handsome youth, "what is his name?"

"M. le Comte de la Fère, madame," replied the young man, bowing.

De Winter made a movement of surprise, while the Queen looked at him, radiant with joy.

"The Comte de la Fère!" she exclaimed: "is not that the name you mentioned to me?"

De Winter could scarcely believe what he had heard.

"M. le Comte de la Fère!" he exclaimed in turn. "Oh, sir, answer me, I beseech you: is not the Comte de la Fère a nobleman whom I knew, handsome and brave, who was one of the Musketeers of Louis XIII., and who may now be forty-seven or forty-eight years of age?"

"Yes, sir; you are perfectly right."

"And who served under a feigned name?"

"Under the name of Athos. Only lately I heard his friend, M. d'Artagnan, call him by that name."

"It is he, madame, it is he — God be praised! And is he in Paris?" continued De Winter, addressing Raoul.

Then turning again to the Queen:

"Hope still, madame," said he; "hope! Providence declares for us, since it enables me to find this brave gentleman in such a miraculous manner. And where is he now, sir, I beg of you?"

"M. le Comte de la Fère is at present residing at the Hôtel du Grand Roi Charlemagne, in the Rue Guénégaud."

"Thank you, sir. Request this excellent friend to remain at home. I will come very shortly to greet him."

"Sir, I will obey you with great pleasure, if her Majesty will give me permission to depart."

"Go, M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne," said the Queen, "and be assured of our affection for you."

Raoul bowed respectfully to the two Princesses, saluted D Winter, and left the room.

De Winter and the Queen continued their conversation in low voice for some time, that the young Princess might nc hear them; but this precaution was unnecessary, for she wa employing herself with her own thoughts.

Then, just as De Winter was about to take leave:

"Wait, my Lord," said the Queen. "I had kept this di mond cross, which I received from my mother, and this crow of St. Michael, which my husband gave me, — they are wort about fifty thousand livres, — and I had sworn to die of hu ger rather than part with these precious pledges. But no that these two ornaments may prove useful to him or to h defenders, all must be sacrificed to that hope. Take then and should you want money for your expedition, sell the without hesitation, my Lord, — sell them. But if you find th means of preserving them, remember, my Lord, that I sha consider you to have rendered me the greatest service that gentleman can pay to a queen, and that, in the day of m prosperity, he who shall bring me back this crown and thi cross will be blessed by me and my children."

"Madame," said De Winter, "your Majesty shall be serve by a most devoted follower. I will deposit in a most secur place these two jewels, which, indeed, I would not have a cepted if anything had been left from my former fortun But my property is confiscated, my ready money is used u and I have disposed of everything I possess. In an hour will visit the Comte de la Fère, and to-morrow your Majest shall have a decisive answer."

The Queen gave her hand to Lord de Winter, who kissed i respectfully, and turning toward her daughter:

"My Lord," said she, "you were charged to deliver som thing to this child from her father."

De Winter was astonished; he did not know what the Quee meant.

The young Henrietta came forward, smiling and blushing and presented her forehead to his Lordship.

"Tell my father," said the young Princess, "that whethe king or fugitive, victor or vanquished, powerful or poor, h has in me a daughter most obedient and affectionate."

"I know it, madame," said De Winter, touching Henrietta' forehead with his lips.

He then departed, traversing, unattended and unconducted, those vast, deserted, and dark chambers, wiping away the tears which, all seared as was his heart by fifty years of a courtier's life, he could not refrain from shedding at the sight of this regal adversity, so dignified, and at the same time so severe.

CHAPTER XLII.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

Lord de Winter's horse and lacquey were waiting for him at the gate. He therefore went toward his hotel absorbed in thought, and occasionally looking back at the dark and silent front of the Louvre. He then saw a horseman detach himself, as it were, from the wall, and follow him at some distance; he remembered having observed a similar figure on leaving the Palais Royal.

Lord de Winter's lacquey, who was following him at the distance of a few paces, had also remarked this horseman with some inquietude.

"Tony," said Lord de Winter, making a sign for his valet to join him.

"Here I am, my Lord;" and the lacquey rode up to his master's side.

"Have you observed the man who is following us?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Who is he?"

"I have not the slightest idea; only he has followed your Lordship from the Palais Royal, waited at the Louvre until you came out, and left that place with you."

"Some spy of the Cardinal's," said De Winter to himself; "let us pretend not to observe that he is watching us."

And spurring forward, he plunged into that labyrinth of streets that conducted him to his hotel, situated on the side of the Marais; for having formerly resided in the Place Royale, Lord de Winter had naturally taken up his abode near his former dwelling.

The stranger put his horse to a gallop.

De Winter dismounted at his hotel and went up to his room, resolved to have the spy watched; but as he was laying his

hat and gloves on a table, he saw, in a mirror which was opposite to him, the reflection of a man who was entering the doorway.

He turned. Mordaunt stood before him.

De Winter became pale and remained motionless. Mordaunt stood at the door, cold, threatening, and like the commander's statue in "Don Juan."

There was a moment of freezing silence between these two men.

"Sir," said De Winter, "I thought that I had made you understand once and for all that this persistency of yours wearied me; retire, therefore, or I will take means to expel you from the house, as I did in London. I am not your uncle — I do not know you!"

"Uncle!" replied Mordaunt, in his harsh and mocking voice, "you are mistaken: you will not drive me away, as you did in London — you will not dare. As for denying that I am your nephew, you will think twice of it now that I have learnt many things of which I was ignorant a year ago."

"And what signifies to me what you have learnt?" said De Winter.

"Oh, it signifies a great deal to you, my uncle, I am sure; and you will soon be of my opinion," he added, with a smile that caused a shudder to run through the veins of him he addressed. "When I came to your house in London the first time, it was to ask you what had become of my property; when I came the second time it was to ask you what had sullied my name. But this time, I present myself before you to put a question to you far different and far more dreadful than the others — to ask you, as God asked the first murderer: 'Cain, what hast thou done with thy brother Abel?' My Lord, what hast thou done with thy sister — with thy sister, who was my mother?"

De Winter recoiled under the fire of those flaming eyes.

"With your mother?" said he.

"Yes, with my mother, my Lord," replied the young man, moving his head up and down.

De Winter exerted a powerful effort over his feelings, and plunging into the depths of his recollections to find a sufficient expression of his hatred, he exclaimed:

"Go and seek your information from hell; perhaps hell can *answer you.*"

The young man then advanced into the room until he stood face to face with Lord de Winter, and, folding his arms:

"I have asked the executioner of Béthune," said he, in a hollow voice, and with a countenance livid with anguish and rage, "and the executioner of Béthune has given me an answer."

De Winter fell on a chair as if struck by lightning, and in vain attempted to reply.

"Yes, is it not so?" continued the young man; "that word explains everything — with that key the abyss opens. My mother was her husband's heir, and you murdered my mother — my name would have insured me my paternal property, and you robbed me of my name! Then when you had deprived me of my name, you robbed me of my estate! I am not now surprised that you disowned me, or that you persist in disowning me: it would be unseemly to call him your nephew whom you have despoiled and impoverished — the man you have made an orphan by murdering his mother!"

These words produced the very opposite effect to that which Mordaunt had expected. De Winter recalled what a monster her Ladyship was; he rose up, grave and calm, and subduing the fiery look of the young man by his severe aspect:

"So you wish to penetrate this horrible secret, sir?" said he. "Well, then, be it so. Learn now what that woman was for whom you this day come to call me to a reckoning. That woman had, in all human probability, poisoned my brother, and, to enjoy my inheritance, she endeavoured afterward to murder me. I have proof of it. What will you say to that?"

"I will say that she was my mother!"

"She caused the unfortunate Duke of Buckingham to be stabbed by a man who, until then, was just, good, and pure. What will you say to that crime, of which I have also proof?"

"She was my mother!"

"Having returned to France, she poisoned a young woman, beloved by one of her enemies, in a Carmelite convent at Béthune. Will this crime convince you of the justice of her punishment? — for of this crime I also possess the proof."

"She was my mother!" exclaimed the young man, who had uttered these exclamations with progressively increasing vehemence.

"In fine, cumbered with murders and debauchery, execrated by all, still threatening, like a tigress craving for blood, she

fell under the blows of men whom she had driven to desperation, and who had never injured her — she found judges whom her detestable outrages had evoked. And this executioner whom you met, and who you pretend told you everything, — if he did tell you everything, he must have informed you that he actually leaped for joy at avenging upon her the disgrace and suicide of his brother. A corrupt girl, an adulterous spouse, an unnatural sister, a homicide, a poisoner, detested by every one who knew her, by every nation that had received her into its bosom, she died, accursed of God and man! There, that is what that woman was!"

A sob, too powerful to be restrained, almost lacerated Mordaunt's throat and drove the blood back to his livid face. He clenched his fists, his face streaming with perspiration, his hair bristling on his forehead like that of Hamlet, he cried out, in a paroxysm of fury:

"Silence, sir! She was my mother! Her frailties, I know them not — her vices, I know them not — her crimes, I know them not! But what I do know is, that I had a mother — that five men, leagued against one woman, slew her secretly, darkly, and silently, like cowards! What I also know is, that you were one of them, sir, — that you were one of them, my uncle, and that you cried out, as the others did, and even louder than the others: *She must die!* Therefore I forewarn you — and mark well my words, and let them be so deeply engraven on your memory that they may never be forgotten — that murder, which has torn everything from me — that murder, which has made me nameless — that murder, which has made me a beggar — for that murder, which has made me corrupt, wicked, and implacable, I shall first call you to a reckoning, and afterward, when I have discovered them, those who were your accomplices!"

With deadly hatred in his eyes, his mouth foaming with rage, his clenched fist extended, Mordaunt had taken a step toward De Winter, with a mien terrible and threatening.

His Lordship put his hand to his sword, and said, with a smile of a man who had sported with death for thirty years:

"Would you assassinate me, sir? In that I do recognise you as my nephew — for you are the true son of your mother!"

"No," replied Mordaunt, compelling all the features of his *countenance* and all the muscles of his body to soften down

and resume their normal state, — "no, I will not kill you — at any rate not at this time; for without you, I should not be able to discover the others. But when I know them, then, sir, tremble. I have stabbed the executioner of Béthune — I stabbed him without pity, without commiseration — and he was the least guilty of you all!"

Having said these words, the young man left the room and went down the staircase with sufficient calmess not to be noticed. On the lower landing-place he passed Tony, who was leaning against the balustrade, and only waiting for a call from his master to go up to him.

But De Winter did not call. Overwhelmed and fainting, he remained intently listening. Then, only when he heard the retreating steps of Mordaunt's horse, he fell back into a chair, exclaiming:

"My God! I thank Thee that I am the only one he knows!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

FATHERHOOD.

WHILE this dreadful scene was passing at Lord de Winter's, Athos, seated by the window of his room, with his elbow resting on a table and his head supported on his hand, was listening, with eyes and ears alike, to the account that Raoul was giving him of his adventures on his journey, and the particulars of the battle.

The gentleman's handsome and noble countenance was beaming with indescribable happiness at the recital of these first impressions, so fresh and so pure; he drank in the sounds of that youthful voice (already attuned to noble sentiments) as he would have done a piece of melody. He had forgotten all that was gloomy in the past or cloudy in the future. It might almost be said that the return of this much-loved boy had converted all his fears into hopes. Athos was happy, happier than he had ever been before.

"And you were present, and took a share in this great battle, Bragelonne?" said the former Musketeer.

"Yes, sir."

"And it was a fierce one, you say?"

"The Prince charged in person eleven times."

"He is a great warrior, Bragelonne?"

"He is a hero, sir! I did not lose sight of him for one instant. Oh! what an honour it is, sir, to be called Condé, and thus to uphold his name."

"Calm and brilliant, is he not?"

"Calm as if on parade; brilliant as if at a fête. When we attacked the enemy it was at a slow march. We were forbidden to fire first; and we advanced on the Spaniards, who held possession of a height with their musket at the thigh. When we had got within thirty paces of them, the Prince turned toward the soldiers:

"'Boys,' said he, 'you have to sustain a furious discharge; but after that, be quite easy — you will make short work with these gentry.'

"There was such a dead silence that both friends and enemies heard these words. Then, raising his sword: 'Sound, trumpets!' said he."

"Well, well, on a similar occasion you would do the same, Raoul, would you not?"

"I think so, sir; for I found it all very beautiful and very grand. When we came within twenty paces of them we saw all those muskets level themselves like a brilliant line, for the sun was shining on their barrels.

"'Slow march, boys, slow march,' said the Prince; 'now is the time.'"

"And were you afraid, Raoul?" inquired the Count.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, with simplicity; "I felt what resembled a sudden chill at my heart, and at the word 'Fire!' which in Spanish resounded along their ranks, I shut my eyes and thought of you."

"Really, Raoul?" said Athos, pressing his hand.

"Yes, sir; and at that moment there was such a report that one would have supposed hell itself had opened, and those who were not killed actually felt the heat of the fire. I opened my eyes, astonished at not being dead, or at any rate wounded. A third part of the squadron was stretched on the ground, mutilated and bleeding. At this moment I met the Prince's eye; thenceforth I thought only of one thing — that he was looking at me. I spurred forward, and found myself in the midst of the enemy's ranks."

"And the Prince was satisfied with you?"

"He at least told me so, sir, when he ordered me to accompany M. de Chatillon to Paris, who brings the news to the Queen, and also the captured standards.

"'Go,' said the Prince to me. 'The enemy cannot rally in less than a fortnight; and until that time I shall not need you. Go, and embrace those you love and who love you, and tell my sister, Madame de Longueville, that I thank her for the present she made me when she gave you to me.'

"And I am come, sir," added Raoul, looking at the Count with a smile of deep affection; "for I thought that you would be very glad to see me."

Athos drew the youth to him and kissed him on the forehead as if he had been a young girl.

"So now, Raoul," said he, "you are launched. You have dukes for friends, a marshal of France for your godfather, a prince of the blood for your captain, and, in one and the same day of your return, you have been received by two queens. This is a fine thing for a novice!"

"Ah, sir," said Raoul suddenly, "you recall one thing which, in my eagerness to tell you my exploits, I had forgotten: at her Majesty the Queen of England's there was a gentleman who, when I mentioned your name, uttered an exclamation of surprise and joy; he said he is one of your friends, asked me for your address, and is soon coming to visit you."

"What is his name?"

"I did not presume to ask him, sir; but although he expresses himself with elegance, I imagine from his accent that he is an Englishman."

"Ah!" said Athos; and he dropped his head as if to bring back some recollection. When he again raised it his eyes were attracted by the appearance of a man who was standing in the half-opened doorway and looking at him with emotion.

"Lord de Winter!" exclaimed the Count.

"Athos, my friend!"

And the two gentlemen embraced. Then Athos, taking both his hands, said, while he looked at him:

"What is the matter with you, my Lord? You appear as sad as I am joyful."

"Yes, my dear friend, it is true; and I will even say that the sight of you redoubles my fears."

And De Winter looked around as if anxious for a more

private interview. Raoul understood that the two friends wished to talk, and left the room without affectation.

"Come, now that we are alone, let us talk about yourself," said Athos.

"While we are alone, let us talk about ourselves," replied Lord de Winter. "*He* is here!".

"Who?"

"Milady's son."

Athos, once more struck by that name which seemed to follow him like a fatal echo, again hesitated a moment, then frowned slightly, and in his calm tone said:

"I know it."

"You know it?"

"Yes; Grimaud met him between Béthune and Arras, and returned hastily to warn me of his presence."

"So Grimaud knew him?"

"No, but he was present at the deathbed of a man who knew him."

"The executioner of Béthune!" exclaimed Lord de Winter.

"Do you know that?" said Athos, in astonishment.

"He has but just this moment left me," replied De Winter; "he told me everything. Ah, my friend, what a dreadful scene! Why did we not kill the child with the mother!"

Athos, like all noble natures, did not impart to others the painful impressions he felt; on the contrary, he, as it were, kept them all to himself, and, in their stead, sent back hope and consolation. It might be said that his own personal sorrows issued from his soul, transmuted into joys and happiness for others.

"What do you fear?" said he, recovering, by reasoning with himself, from the instinctive terror he had first experienced. "Are we not able to defend ourselves? Has this young man made himself a professional assassin — a cold-blooded murderer? He has killed the executioner of Béthune in an excess of rage, and his fury must be now satiated."

De Winter smiled sadly and shook his head.

"Can it be that you forget his origin?" said he.

"Bah!" cried Athos, endeavouring to smile in his turn; "it must have lost its ferocity in the second generation. Besides, my friend, Providence has forewarned us, so that we may be on our guard. We can do nothing but wait. Let us

wait. But, as I said before, let us talk about yourself. What brings you to Paris?"

"Some important affairs, which you will know hereafter. But what have I heard from the Queen of England — that M. d'Artagnan is for Mazarin? Pardon my frankness, my friend. I neither hate nor blame the Cardinal, and your opinion will always be sacred to me. Are *you* also devoted to that man?"

"M. d'Artagnan is in the service," replied Athos. "He is a soldier; he obeys the constituted authority. M. d'Artagnan is not rich, and is obliged to live on his pay as a lieutenant. Wealthy men, like yourself, my Lord, are very rare in France."

"Alas!" said De Winter, "I am now as poor as he is, nay, even poorer. But let us return to yourself."

"Well, then, you wish to know whether I support Mazarin? No — a thousand times, no! Pardon me also for my frankness, my Lord."

De Winter arose and embraced Athos.

"Thanks, Count," said he, "thanks for this happy news. You now see me happy and reinvigorated. Ah! you are not for Mazarin; so much the better. Besides, it could not be. But pardon me again — are you free?"

"What do you mean by free?"

"I ask whether you are not married?"

"Ah! as to that, no," replied Athos, smiling.

"That young man, so handsome, so elegant, so graceful" —

"He is a boy I am bringing up, and who does not even know his father."

"Very well; you are still the same Athos, noble and generous."

"Come, my Lord, what do you ask of me?"

"You have still Porthos and Aramis for your friends?"

"And add D'Artagnan, my Lord. We are still four friends, as much devoted to one another as formerly. But when the question is whether to serve or to oppose the Cardinal, — to be Mazarins or Frondeurs, — we are but two."

"Is M. Aramis with D'Artagnan?" demanded the Baron.

"No," replied Athos; "M. Aramis does me the honour to share in my convictions."

"Can you put me into communication with that charming and talented friend?"

"Undoubtedly, whenever you please."

"Is he changed?"

"He has become an abbé — that is all."

"You alarm me; his position must therefore have induced him to renounce great enterprises."

"On the contrary," said Athos, smiling, "he has never been so much of a Musketeer as since he became an abbé; and you will find him a perfect Galaor. Do you wish me to send Raoul for him?"

"Thank you, Count; he might not be found at home at this hour. But since you think that you could answer for him" —

"As for myself."

"Could you engage to bring him to me at ten o'clock to-morrow, on the Louvre bridge?"

"Ah!" said Athos, smiling; "have you a duel?"

"Yes, Count, a splendid duel — a duel in which you will be engaged, I hope."

"Where shall we go, my Lord?"

"To her Majesty the Queen of England, who has commanded me to present you to her, Count."

"Why, does her Majesty know of me?"

"I know you, myself."

"An enigma," said Athos. "But never mind; so long as you have the interpretation of it, I ask for nothing more. Will you do me the honour of supping with me, my Lord?"

"Thank you, Count," said De Winter; "but that young man's visit has, I confess, deprived me of all appetite, and will probably spoil my sleep. What can he be doing in Paris? He is not come to meet me, for he did not know of my journey. That young man alarms me, Count; he will have a bloody future."

"What is he doing in England?"

"He is one of the most ardent followers of Cromwell."

"What could have induced him to support that party? His father and mother were both Catholics, I believe."

"The hatred that he feels for the King."

"For the King?"

"Yes, the King declared him illegitimate, deprived him of his estates, and forbade him to bear the name of De Winter."

"And what name does he go by now?"

"Mordaunt."

"Puritan, and disguised as a monk, journeying alone on the roads of France."

"As a monk, do you say?"

"Yes; did you not know it?"

"I know nothing but what he himself has told me."

"It was thus and by accident — I ask pardon of God if I blaspheme — it was thus that he heard the confession of the executioner of Béthune."

"Then I understand it all: he has been sent here by Cromwell."

"To whom?"

"To Mazarin; and the Queen guessed rightly — we have been anticipated; everything is clear to me now. Adieu, Count, till to-morrow."

"But the night is dark," said Athos, perceiving that Lord de Winter was more agitated than he wished to confess, "and perhaps you have no lacquey."

"I have Tony, a good but simple lad."

"Hallo! Olivain, Grimaud, Blaisois, take your muskets and call the Viscount."

Blaisois was that great tall lad, half lacquey, half peasant, whom we saw announcing the dinner at the Château de Bragelonne, and whom Athos had christened by the name of his province.

Five minutes after this order had been given, Raoul entered.

"Viscount," said Athos, "you will escort his Lordship to his hotel, and allow no one to come near him."

"Ah, Count," said De Winter, "for whom, then, do you take me?"

"For a stranger who does not know Paris," replied Athos, "and to whom the Viscount will show the way."

De Winter pressed his hand.

"Grimaud," said Athos, "put yourself at the head of the troop and beware of the monk!"

Grimaud started; then he nodded his head and awaited their departure, caressing, with a silent eloquence, the butt-end of his musket.

"Till to-morrow, Count," said De Winter.

"Yes, my Lord."

The little troop went toward the Rue Saint Louis — Olivain trembling like Sosia at every doubtful gleam of light; Blaisois sufficiently bold, because he did not know that they incurred any danger; Tony looking from right to left, but unable to say one word, for he could not speak French.

De Winter and Raoul walked side by side and conversed together.

Grimaud, who, according to Athos's command, led the party, with torch in one hand and his musket in the other, reached Lord de Winter's hotel, rapped at the door with his knuckles, and when it was opened, bowed to his Lordship without saying a word.

They returned back in the same order. Grimaud's piercing eyes saw nothing suspicious, except a kind of shadow hidden at the corner of the Rue Guénégaud and the quay; and he fancied that he had before, on passing, remarked this lurking night-watcher who attracted his eyes. He spurred toward him; but before he could reach him the shadow had disappeared down a lane, where Grimaud did not consider it prudent to follow him.

They gave Athos an account of the success of the expedition; and then, as it was ten o'clock, retired to their sleeping-rooms.

The next morning, on opening his eyes, Athos, in his turn, perceived Raoul by his bedside. The young man was completely dressed, and reading a new work by M. Chapelain.

"Already up, Raoul?" said the Count.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, with some slight hesitation. "I have slept badly."

"You, Raoul! — you slept badly! Did anything worry you?" asked Athos.

"Sir, you will say that I am in great haste to leave you, seeing that I am as yet scarcely arrived; but" —

"So you had only two days' leave of absence, Raoul?"

"On the contrary, I have ten. I was not intending to go to the camp."

Athos smiled.

"Where then," said he — "unless it be a secret, Viscount? You are nearly a man, since you have made your first campaign; and you have thus acquired the right of going where you like, without saying anything to me."

"Never, sir," said Raoul; "so long as I have the happiness of possessing you as my guardian, shall I think myself at liberty to free myself from a guardianship that is so dear to me. But I should like to pass a single day only at Blois. Ah, sir, you look as if you were going to laugh at me."

"No, on the contrary," said Athos, suppressing a sigh—

"no, I do not laugh, Viscount. You wish to revisit Blois, and it is quite natural."

"Then you will allow me!" exclaimed Raoul, quite delighted.

"Assuredly, Raoul."

"And you are not secretly displeased, sir?"

"Not at all. Why should I be displeased at what makes you happy?"

"Ah, sir, how good you are!" exclaimed the youth, making a motion as if to fall on Athos's neck; but respect restrained him.

Athos opened his arms.

"Then I may set off directly?"

"When you please, Raoul."

Raoul took three steps, to leave the room.

"I have thought of one thing, sir," said he: "it is that I am indebted to Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse for my kind introduction to the Prince."

"And that you owe her some thanks — is it not so, Raoul?"

"It appears so to me, sir; but you must decide it."

"Go by the Hôtel de Luynes, Raoul, and inquire whether the Duchess can receive you. I perceive with pleasure that you do not forget the courtesies of society. You will take Grimaud and Olivain."

"Both of them, sir?" demanded Raoul, with astonishment.

"Yes, both."

Raoul bowed and left the room.

On seeing him shut the door, and hearing his joyous and ringing voice call Grimaud and Olivain, Athos sighed.

"It is very soon to leave me," thought he, shaking his head; "but he obeys the usual law. Nature is thus constituted, and ever looks forward. He certainly still loves that young girl; but will he love me less because he loves others?"

And Athos internally confessed that he did not expect such a prompt departure; but his own feelings were forgotten by Athos in the thought that Raoul was so happy.

At ten o'clock everything was ready for the departure. While Athos was looking at Raoul, who was mounting his horse, a lacquey arrived from Madame de Chevreuse. He was commissioned to tell the Count de la Fère that she had heard of her young protégé's return, as also of his conduct in the battle, and that she would be much pleased to congratulate him.

"Inform the Duchess," replied Athos, "that the Viscount is just mounting his horse to proceed to the Hôtel de Luynes."

Having given fresh instructions to Grimaud, Athos waived his hand to Raoul to depart.

Moreover, on reflection, Athos thought that perhaps, after all, there was no harm in Raoul leaving Paris at this moment.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ANOTHER QUEEN WHO ASKS ASSISTANCE.

Athos had sent to Aramis in the morning, and had despatched the letter by Blaisois, the only servant he had left. Blaisois found Bazin putting on his beadle's gown; he was this day on duty at Notre Dame.

Athos had directed Blaisois to endeavour to see Aramis himself. So Blaisois, a tall, awkward lad who thought of nothing but his instructions, had inquired for the Abbé d'Herblay; and, in spite of Bazin's assurances that he was not at home, had persisted in such a manner that Bazin flew into a rage. Blaisois, seeing Bazin in his clerical costume, had paid but little attention to his denials, and wished to pass further; imagining that the man with whom he was dealing was gifted with all the virtues of his garb — that is to say, with Christian charity and patience.

But Bazin, always a Musketeer's lacquey when his blood rose, seized a broom-handle and began to thrash Blaisois, exclaiming:

"You have insulted the Church, my friend, — you have insulted the Church!"

At this unusual noise Aramis made his appearance, cautiously opening his bedroom door.

Bazin now respectfully placed his broom-handle on end, as he had seen the Swiss place his halberd at Notre Dame; and Blaisois, with a reproachful glance at the Cerberus, drew the letter from his pocket and presented it to Aramis.

"From the Comte de la Fère?" said Aramis; "very well."

And he retired, without even asking the cause of all the disturbance.

Blaisois returned sorrowfully to the Hôtel du Grand Roi

Charlemagne. Athos inquired whether he had executed his commission. Blaisois recounted his adventure.

"Silly fellow!" said Athos, laughing. "So you did not say that you came from me?"

"No, sir."

"And what did Bazin say when he found that you were in my service?"

"Ah, sir, he made me all sorts of excuses, and obliged me to drink two glasses of capital Muscat wine in which he made me sop three or four excellent biscuits. But, for all that, he is a devil of a brute. A beadle! Fie on him!"

"Good," said Athos; "as Aramis has received my letter, he will come at all events."

At ten o'clock Athos, with his usual punctuality, was on the Louvre bridge. He there met Lord de Winter, who arrived at the same time.

They waited about ten minutes.

Lord de Winter was beginning to fear that Aramis would not come.

"Patience," said Athos, who kept his eyes fixed in the direction of the Rue du Bac — "patience! Yonder is an abbé, who is just giving a cuff to a man and bowing to a woman. That must be Aramis."

In fact, it was he. A young city fellow, idly gaping, stood in his way, and Aramis, whom he had bespattered, had sent him ten paces back with a blow of his fist. Almost at the same moment one of his fair penitents had passed him, and, as she was young and pretty, he had bowed to her with a most gracious smile.

In a moment Aramis was with them.

There were, as may be imagined, hearty greetings between him and Lord de Winter.

"Where are we going?" asked Aramis; "are we going to fight? *Sacrebleu!* I have no sword this morning, and must return home to get one."

"No," said De Winter, "we are only going to pay a visit to her Majesty the Queen of England."

"Ah, very well," said Aramis. "And what is the object of this visit?" continued he, bending over to Athos's ear.

"Faith, I have not the least idea; perhaps some testimony wanted of us."

"Can it be about *that* cursed affair?" said Aramis. "In

that case I should not much care to go, for it would be to receive an admonition; and since I have begun to give them to others, I do not relish receiving them myself."

"If that were the case," replied Athos, "we should not be conducted to her Majesty by Lord de Winter, for he would deserve his share; he was one of us."

"Ah, yes, that is true. Come along, then."

Having reached the Louvre, Lord de Winter entered first. The door was attended by a single porter only. As it was daylight, Athos, Aramis, and the Englishman could perceive the frightful nakedness of the dwelling which a niggardly charity conceded to the unfortunate queen. Large rooms despoiled of their furniture; dilapidated walls on which shone here and there, patches of old gilt mouldings which had resisted the desolation; windows that would not shut, and that wanted glass; no carpets, no guards, no lacqueys — this was what first attracted Athos's attention, and he silently pointed it out to Aramis by touching him with his elbow.

"Mazarin is better lodged," said Aramis.

"Mazarin is almost king," said Athos, "and Madame Henrietta is almost no longer a queen."

"If you would deign to cultivate your wit, Athos," said Aramis, "I verily believe that you would have more than that poor M. de Voiture."

Athos smiled.

The Queen appeared to have been impatiently awaiting their arrival, for at the first sound she heard in the antechamber, she came to the door to receive the courtiers of her distress.

"Enter, and welcome, gentlemen," said she.

The gentlemen entered, and at first remained standing; but on a sign which the Queen gave them to sit down, Athos was the first to obey her. He was serious and calm; but Aramis was furious. This regal penury had exasperated him; his eyes sought out every fresh proof of the poverty which he discovered.

"You are observing my luxury," said the Queen, casting a melancholy look around her.

"Madame," replied Aramis, "I beg your Majesty's pardon but I could not restrain my indignation on beholding a daughter of Henry IV. treated in this manner at the French *Court.*"

"This gentleman is not a cavalier, is he?" asked the Queen, turning to Lord de Winter.

"The gentleman is the Abbé d'Herblay," he replied.

Aramis coloured.

"Madame," said he, "I am an abbé, it is true; but it is contrary to my inclination. I had no partiality for the little collar; my cassock is only held on by a single button, and I am always ready again to become a Musketeer. This morning, ignorant that I was to have the honour of seeing your Majesty, I muffled myself up in this dress; but I am not the less a man whom your Majesty will find most devoted to your service in anything that you may please to command."

"The Chevalier d'Herblay," said De Winter, "is one of those valiant Musketeers of his Majesty Louis XIII. of whom I spoke to you, madame." Then turning toward Athos: "This gentleman," he continued, "is the noble Comte de la Fère whose lofty reputation is so well known to your Majesty."

"Gentlemen," said the Queen, "some years ago I was surrounded by nobles, treasures, and armies, and at a wave of my hand they were ready to serve me. Now look around you — it will doubtless surprise you — but to accomplish a plan which may save my life, I have only Lord de Winter, a friend of twenty years' standing, and you, gentlemen, whom I now see for the first time, and whom I only know as my compatriots."

"It is sufficient, madame," said Aramis, with a low bow, "if the lives of three men can redeem yours."

"Thank you, gentlemen; but listen to me," she continued: "I am not only the most wretched of queens, but the most unhappy of mothers and the most desperate of wives. My children, at least two of them, — the Duke of York and the Princess Charlotte, — are at a distance from me, exposed to the attempts of the ambitious and the machinations of their enemies. The King, my husband, drags on such a miserable existence in England that it is not saying much when I affirm that he seeks death as an alleviation. Here, gentlemen, is a letter which my Lord de Winter brought me. Read it."

Athos and Aramis excused themselves.

"Read," said the Queen.

Athos then read aloud the letter in which, as we have seen, Charles asked for the hospitality of France.

"Well?" said Athos, when he had finished the perusal.

"Well," said the Queen, "*he* has refused it."

The two friends exchanged a disdainful smile.

"And now, madame, what must we do?" demanded Athc

"Have you, then, some compassion for so much misfortune?" said the Queen, with emotion.

"I have had the honour of requesting your Majesty to st what you wish M. d'Herblay and myself to do for you; are ready."

"Ah, sir, you have indeed a noble heart!" exclaimed t Queen, with a burst of gratitude; while Lord de Winter look at her as much as to say:

"Did I not answer for them?"

"But you, sir?" said the Queen, turning to Aramis.

"I, madame?" he replied; "wherever the Count g were it even unto death, I follow, without asking why; when your Majesty's service is the question," he added, lo ing at the Queen with all the grace of his youth, "then I p cede the Count."

"Well, then, gentlemen," said the Queen, "since this is case, — since you are willing to serve a poor princess wh all the world abandons, — see what I wish you to do for The King stands alone, with the exception of some gentlen whom he fears to lose any day, in the midst of the Sco whom he distrusts, although he is himself a Scotchman. Si Lord de Winter has left him, I am dying with fear for h gentlemen. Well, then, perhaps I require far too much fr you — for I have, in fact, no right to ask anything: go England, join the King, be his friends, his guardians, ma by his side in battle, keep near him in the interior of dwelling, where snares are daily laid for him much m dangerous than the perils of war; and in exchange for t sacrifice which you will make me, gentlemen, I promise — to recompense you, for I believe that the expression wo wound your feelings, but — to love you as a sister, and prefer you to every one except my husband and children. T I swear in the presence of God!"

And the Queen raised her eyes, slowly and solemnly, tow heaven.

"Madame," said Athos, "when must we depart?"

"Then you consent?" said the Queen, with great joy.

"Yes, madame; only your Majesty goes too far, I think, *engaging* to overwhelm us with a friendship far beyond

leserts. We are serving God, madame, by saving a king so unfortunate and a queen so virtuous. Madame, we are yours, body and soul!"

"Ah, gentlemen," said the Queen, affected even to tears, "behold the first moment of joy and hope that I have experienced for five years. Yes, you serve God; and since my power is far too limited to recompense such a service, He will reward you — He who reads in my heart all the gratitude that I feel for you. Save my husband — save the King; and although you may not see the reward which may redound to you on earth for such a noble action, yet let me hope that I may see you to thank you for it. In the meantime, I will wait. Have you any commission to give me? I am from this moment your friend; and since you employ yourselves in my affairs, I ought to occupy myself with yours."

"Madame," said Athos, "I have nothing to ask of your Majesty but your prayers."

"And I," said Aramis, "am a solitary being in the world: I have only to serve your Majesty."

The Queen held out her hand to them, which they kissed; and she said to Lord de Winter in a low voice:

"If you want money, my Lord, do not hesitate one moment: break the jewels I gave you, separate the diamonds from them and sell them to a Jew; they will produce from fifty to sixty thousand livres. Spend all, if necessary; but let these gentlemen be treated as they deserve — that is to say, like kings."

The Queen had prepared two letters, one written by herself, one by the Princess, her daughter. Both were addressed to King Charles. She gave one to Athos and one to Aramis, in order that, if any chance should separate them, they might be able to make themselves known to the King. They then retired.

At the bottom of the staircase Lord de Winter stopped.

"You go your way, gentlemen," said he, "and I will go mine, that we may not excite any suspicion; and this evening, at nine o'clock, let us meet at the Porte Saint Denis. We will go with my horses as far as they can carry us, and then we will take post. Again, my good friends, I thank you — thank you in my own name and in the Queen's."

The three gentlemen shook hands, Lord de Winter went down the Rue Saint Honoré, and Athos and Aramis remained together.

"Well," said Aramis when they were alone, "what do you think of this affair, my dear Count?"

"A bad one — a very bad one!" replied Athos.

"But you undertook it with enthusiasm."

"As I shall always undertake the defence of a great principle, my dear D'Herblay. Kings can be strong only through the nobles, but the nobles can be great only through royalty. Let us then support monarchy, for by that means we support ourselves."

"We shall be assassinated over there," said Aramis. "I hate the English; they are coarse, as all people are who drink beer."

"Why, would it be better to remain here," said Athos, "and to go and take a turn in the Bastille, or in the prison at Vincennes, for having helped the escape of the Duc de Beaufort? Faith! Aramis, believe me, we have nothing to regret. We avoid a prison, and we act as heroes; the choice is easy."

"It is true; but under all circumstances it is necessary to revert to that first of all questions, — very foolish, I allow, yet indispensable, — have you any money?"

"Somewhere about a hundred pistoles, which my farmer sent me just as I was leaving Bragelonne. But of that I ought to leave about half for Raoul; a young gentleman must live properly. So I have only about fifty pistoles. And you?"

"I? I am quite certain that, by turning out all my pockets and ransacking my drawers, I could not find ten louis. But, fortunately, Lord de Winter is rich."

"Lord de Winter is, for the time, actually ruined, for Cromwell has taken possession of his revenues."

"See, now, how useful the Baron Porthos would be in this case," said Aramis.

"And now do I regret D'Artagnan!" said Athos.

"What a fat purse!"

"What a powerful sword!"

"Let us entice them away."

"This secret is not ours, Aramis; believe me, we must not admit any one to our confidence. Besides, by such a step we should appear to lack confidence in ourselves. Let us lament this to each other, but speak of it to no one else."

"You are right. What are you going to do from now till evening? I am obliged to put off two things."

"And are they things which can be put off?"

"Forsooth! they must be."

"And what are they?"

"First, a sword-thrust to the coadjutor, whom I met last evening at Madame Rambouillet's, and whom I found assuming a very singular tone toward me."

"Fie! a duel between priests — a quarrel between allies!"

"What would you have, my dear? He is a fighter — so am I. He runs about the streets — so do I also. His cassock encumbers him, and I have quite enough of mine, I believe. I verily believe, sometimes, that he is Aramis and that I am the coadjutor, we so much resemble each other. This species of Sosia annoys and reduces me to a shadow. I am quite convinced that if I gave him a slap, as I did to that youngster who bespattered me this morning, it would change the face of affairs."

"And I, my dear Aramis," quietly responded Athos, "am of opinion that it would only change M. de Retz's face; therefore leave things as they are. Besides, you are neither of you your own masters; you belong to the Queen of England, and he to the Fronde. So, if your second affair, which you regret that you cannot accomplish, be not of more consequence than the first" —

"Oh! that is very important."

"Then execute it immediately."

"Unfortunately, I am not at liberty to perform it at whatever hour I please. It was for the evening — late in the evening."

"I understand," said Athos, smiling; "at midnight."

"About that time."

"Why, my dear fellow! Such an affair as that may be deferred, and you will defer it, especially when you have such an excuse to give on your return."

"Yes, if I should return."

"If you do not return, what difference does it make to you? Therefore be a little reasonable. Come, Aramis, you are no longer a boy of twenty, my friend."

"Much to my sorrow, mortdieu! Ah, if I were only twenty!"

"Yes, and I believe you would commit a precious number of follies," said Athos. "But we must separate. I have one or two visits to pay and a letter to write. Come, then, to take

me up at eight o'clock; or do you prefer my expecting you to supper at seven?"

"Very well. I have twenty visits to make and as many letters to write."

And upon this they separated. Athos paid a visit to Madame de Vendôme, left his card with the Duchesse de Chevreuse, and wrote the following letter to D'Artagnan:

"*Dear Friend:*

"*I am now setting off with Aramis on an important affair. I would bid you farewell, but have no time. Do not forget that I write to tell you how much I love you.*

"*Raoul is gone to Blois, and does not know of my departure. Watch over him as much as you can during my absence; and should you by chance hear nothing of me for three months, tell him to open a sealed packet, addressed to him, which he will find at Blois, in my bronze casket, of which I send you the key.*

"*Embrace Porthos for Aramis and for myself. Au revoir! perhaps adieu!*"

And he sent the letter by Blaisois.

At the appointed hour Aramis arrived. He was dressed as a cavalier, and had at his side that good old sword which he had so often drawn, and which he was more than ever ready to draw.

"There now!" said he, "I decidedly think that we are wrong to go off in this manner, without a word of farewell to Porthos and D'Artagnan."

"The thing is done, my dear friend," said Athos; "I have provided for that. I have saluted them, both for you and myself."

"You are an admirable man, my dear Count," said Aramis; "you think of everything."

"Well, now, are you reconciled to this journey?"

"Entirely so; and, now that I have thought it over, I am glad to leave Paris at this moment."

"And so am I," replied Athos. "I only regret that I have not embraced D'Artagnan; but the demon is so sly that he would have guessed our projects."

When supper was over, Blaisois entered.

"Sir," said he, "here is M. D'Artagnan's answer."

"But did I not tell you that it required no answer, you ool?" said Athos.

"And so I went off without waiting for one; but he called ıe back and gave me this." And he handed Athos a little eather bag, round and metallic-sounding.

Athos opened it, and first drew out a small note couched in hese terms:

My dear Count:

"When any one travels, and especially for three months, one ıever has enough of money. Now, I remember our days of ıoverty, and send you half my purse; it is the money that I ucceeded in sweating out of Mazarin; therefore do not make oo bad a use of it, I beg of you.

"As to not seeing you again, I do not believe a word of it. With such a sword and such a heart as you have, you must nake your way through anything.

"So au revoir and not adieu.

"It is superfluous to say that from the first day that I saw Raoul, I loved him as if he was my own child; yet believe me hat I sincerely pray God that I may not become his father, ılthough I should be proud of such a son.

"Your D'Artagnan.

"P.S. It is, of course, understood that the fifty louis which I send belong to you as well as to Aramis, and to Aramis as vell as to you."

Athos smiled, and his beautiful eyes were dimmed by a tear. D'Artagnan, whom he had loved so tenderly, then still loved ıim — devoted though he was to Mazarin.

"By my faith, here are fifty louis," said Aramis, pouring hem on the table, "all with the effigy of Louis XIII. Well, vhat will you do with this money, Count? Do you mean to ceep or return it?"

"I shall keep it, Aramis; and even if I did not need it, I ihould keep it. What is so generously offered should be as generously accepted. Take twenty-five, Aramis, and give me he other five-and-twenty."

"Very good. I am glad that you agree with me. There, ıow, let us be off."

"When you please. But have you no servant?"

"No; that ass of a Bazin has had the folly to become a beadle, as you know, so that he cannot leave Notre Dame."

"Very well, then you shall take Blaisois, for I do not know what to do with him, as I already have Grimaud."

"Willingly," said Aramis.

At that moment Grimaud appeared at the door.

"Ready," said he, with his usual brevity.

"Let us start, then," said Athos.

The horses, ready saddled, were awaiting them. The two friends mounted, as did the lacqueys. At the corner of the quay they met Bazin, running and out of breath.

"Ah, sir," said he, "God be praised! I am in time."

"What is the matter?"

"M. Porthos has just left the house, and left this for you, saying that it was of great consequence and must be delivered before your departure."

"Good," said Aramis, taking a purse which Bazin held out to him; "what is this?"

"Stop, M. l'Abbé; there is also a letter."

"You know that I told you if you called me anything but Chevalier I would break your bones! Give me the letter."

"How will you read it?" said Athos; "it is as dark as an oven."

"Wait," said Bazin; and striking his steel he lighted a small twisted taper, which he used for lighting his candles.

By the light of this taper Aramis read:

"*My dear D'Herblay:*

"*I hear from D'Artagnan, who saluted me from you and the Comte de la Fère, that you are going on an expedition that may last two or three months. As I know that you do not like asking aid of your friends, I offer it to you. I send two hundred pistoles, which you may use and return whenever it may be convenient. Do not fear that you are incommoding me; if I want money, I will send for it from one of my châteaux; at Bracieux, alone, I have twenty thousand livres in gold. So if I do not send you any more, it is because I fear that you would not accept of a larger sum.*

"*I write to you because you know that the Comte de la Fère somewhat overawes me, in spite of myself, although I love him with all my heart; but of course you understand that what I offer to you I at the same time offer to him.*

"*I am, as I hope you well know, your most devoted*

"*Du Vallon de Bracieux de Pierrefonds.*"

"Well," said Aramis, "what do you say to that?"

"I say, my dear D'Herblay, that it is almost sacrilege to doubt Providence when one has such friends."

"Therefore" —

"Therefore let us share Porthos's pistoles, as we have shared D'Artagnan's louis."

The division being made by the light of Bazin's taper, the two friends pursued their journey.

A quarter of an hour later they were at the Porte Saint Denis, where Lord de Winter met them.

CHAPTER XLV.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT THE FIRST IMPULSE IS ALWAYS THE BEST.

THE three gentlemen took the Picardie road; that road so well known to them recalled to Athos and Aramis some of the most picturesque recollections of their youth.

"If Mousqueton were with us," said Athos, on reaching the spot where they had the dispute with the paviours, "how he would shudder on passing by this place! Do you recollect, Aramis? It was here that he was struck by that famous ball."

"Faith, and I would permit him to do so," said Aramis; "for I feel myself shuddering at the recollection. There, just beyond that tree, is a little spot where I verily thought I was dying."

They continued their journey. It was soon Grimaud's turn to ransack his memory. Having reached the front of the inn where he and his master had enjoyed such an enormous banquet, he went up to Athos, and, pointing to the air-hole of the cellar, said to him:

"Sausages!"

Athos began to laugh; and that folly of his youth appeared to him as amusing as if any one had related it of another person.

After a journey of two days and a night they reached Boulogne, on a most beautiful evening. It was then comparatively a deserted town, entirely built on the height. What

is now called the lower town was not then in existence. Boulogne occupied a formidable position.

On reaching the gates of the town:

"Gentlemen," said De Winter, "let us here separate, as we did in Paris, to avoid suspicion. I know a tavern which is but little frequented, but the master of which is wholly devoted to me. I will go there, for I expect to find some letters waiting for me. But do you go to the first tavern in the town, — *L'Epée du Grand Henri*, for instance, — there refresh yourselves, and in two hours proceed to the jetty; our boat should be waiting for us there."

Matters being thus arranged, Lord de Winter proceeded along the exterior boulevards, to enter by another gate, while the two friends went in by the one where they were; about two hundred yards farther on they found the tavern indicated.

They baited their horses without having them unsaddled. The lacqueys supped, for it was beginning to grow late; and the two masters, very impatient to embark, ordered them to follow them to the jetty, with strict injunctions not to exchange a single word with any one whatever. It may be readily imagined that this order referred to Blaisois only; for as regarded Grimaud, it had for a long time been superfluous.

Athos and Aramis went down to the harbour.

By their dust-covered dress, and by a certain air of careless ease which always distinguishes men accustomed to travel, the two friends attracted the attention of some loungers.

They saw one, more particularly, on whom their arrival seemed to make some impression. This man, who had first attracted their attention for the same reason that had drawn on them the observation of others, was walking up and down the jetty with a melancholy air; but from the moment that he saw them he did not cease to regard them attentively, and seemed to be most anxious to address them.

He was young and pale, with eyes of such a doubtful blue that they appeared to contract and dilate like those of a tiger, according to the colours they reflected. His gait, in spite of the slowness and irregularity of his pace, was stiff and formal. He was dressed in black, and had a long sword, which he carried gracefully enough.

Having reached the jetty, Athos and Aramis stopped to look at a small boat moored to a post, and already prepared as if *it was* waiting for some one.

"It is ours, no doubt," said Athos.

"Yes," said Aramis; "and the sloop yonder, with her sails set, looks as if it was the one that is to carry us to our destination. Now," he continued, "I hope De Winter will not make us wait; it is not very amusing to remain here — there is not a single woman to be seen."

"Hush!" said Athos; "some one is listening."

In fact, while the two friends were making their examination, the gentleman who had been walking up and down behind them suddenly stopped when Lord de Winter's name was mentioned; but as his countenance betrayed no emotion on hearing this name, he might have stopped entirely by chance.

"Gentlemen," said the young man, bowing with much ease and politeness, "pardon my curiosity, but I perceive that you are come from Paris, or, at least, that you are strangers to Boulogne."

"Yes, sir, we are come from Paris," replied Athos, with equal courtesy; "is there anything we can do for you?"

"Sir," said the young man, "would you be so kind as to tell me if it is true that Cardinal Mazarin is no longer minister?"

"That is a singular question," said Aramis.

"He is, and he is not," replied Athos; "that is to say, while one-half of France rejects him, he, by means of intrigue and promises, causes himself to be supported by the other half; and that may last some time, you see."

"Then, sir," continued the stranger, "he is neither a fugitive nor in prison."

"No, sir; not at present, at any rate."

"Gentlemen, accept my thanks for your politeness," said the young man, taking his departure.

"And what do you think of this inquisitive person?" asked Aramis.

"Why, that he is either a countryman who does not know what to do with himself, or a spy seeking information."

"And yet you answered him in this manner!"

"Nothing would have justified me in answering him otherwise. He was polite to me, and I was the same to him."

"But yet, if he was a spy" —

"And what can a spy do? We are no longer living in the times of Cardinal Richelieu, who closed the ports, even on a simple suspicion."

"Still, you were wrong in answering him as you did," said Aramis, following the young man with his eyes until he had disappeared behind the sand-hills along the shore.

"And you," said Athos, "forgot that you were very imprudent in mentioning Lord de Winter's name. Do you forget that when he heard that name the young man stopped?"

"For which reason you were more especially bound to tell him to go about his business, when he addressed you."

"A quarrel?" said Athos.

"And how long is it since a quarrel has frightened you?"

"A quarrel always alarms me when I am expected anywhere, and when the quarrel may prevent my reaching the place. Besides, shall I confess one thing to you? I also was curious to have a near view of that young man."

"And why so?"

"Aramis, perhaps you will laugh at me, you will say that I am always harping on the same string, and that I am the most timid of visionaries."

"Well?"

"Whom do you think that young man resembles?"

"In ugliness or in beauty?" asked Aramis.

"In ugliness, so far as a man can resemble a woman."

"Ah, pardieu!" exclaimed Aramis; "you make me think. No, my dear friend, you are no visionary; and now that I reflect — yes, you are actually right; that mouth, delicate and compressed, those eyes, which appear always to follow the emotions of the soul and not of the heart, — he is one of milady's bastards."

"And you laugh, Aramis?"

"Merely from habit, that is all; for I protest that I should not relish, any more than you would, to meet that snake in my path."

"Ah, there comes De Winter now," said Athos.

"Good!" cried Aramis; "only one thing is now wanting — we shall have to wait for our lacqueys."

"No," said Athos, "I can see them; they are following his Lordship. I can distinguish Grimaud by his stiff way of holding his head and by his long legs; and Tony is carrying our carbines."

"So are we going to embark at night?" exclaimed Aramis, casting a glance at the west, where the sun had left nothing but a golden cloud, which appeared gradually to be extinguished as it sank into the sea.

"It is most probable," replied Athos.

"The devil!" replied Aramis. "I like the sea little enough by day, but still less at night. The roar of the waves, the howling of the winds, the horrible motion of the vessel, — I confess that I should prefer the monastery at Noisy."

Athos smiled in his melancholy way; for while he was listening to what his friend said, he was evidently thinking of something else. He went towards De Winter, and Aramis followed.

"What is the matter with our friend?" exclaimed Aramis; he looks like one of Dante's damned, whose neck Satan has twisted round till his nose is over his heels. What the plague is he looking back at so earnestly?"

On perceiving them Lord de Winter quickened his pace, and came up to them with remarkable rapidity.

"What is the matter with you, my Lord?" inquired Athos, and what has put you so much out of breath?"

"Nothing," replied De Winter, "nothing; and yet I fancied that on passing near those sand-hills"—

And he again turned round.

Athos looked at Aramis.

"But let us be off," continued De Winter; "let us be off. The boat must be waiting for us, and yonder is our sloop at anchor. You can see it from hence. I wish I was on board of her."

And he again turned round.

"Ah," said Aramis, "have you forgotten something?"

"No, I was worried a little."

"He saw him," said Athos to Aramis in a low voice.

They had reached the steps that led to the boat. De Winter first made the lacqueys go down with the arms; the porters followed with the luggage; and then he himself began to descend.

At that moment Athos perceived on the seashore, parallel to the jetty, a man who quickened his pace as if anxious to be witness of their embarkation at the other side of the harbour, distant about twenty yards. In the midst of the descending shadows, Athos fancied he could recognise the young man who had accosted them.

"Oh, ho," said he, "can he really be a spy, and would he oppose our embarkation?"

But if this was really the stranger's intention, it was now somewhat too late to put it into execution, and Athos de-

scended the stairs; but he did not lose sight of the young man, who, to make a short cut, had got on a sluice-gate.

"He really has a design on us," said Athos; "but nevertheless let us embark; and once out at sea, let him come if he will."

And Athos leaped into the boat, which was immediately cast loose from its moorings, and began to leave the jetty under the impulse of four strong rowers.

But the young man followed, or rather preceded, the boat, which was obliged to pass between the end of the jetty commanded by the lantern which had just been lighted and a rock that jutted out. They saw him climb up the rock, so as to stand above the boat as she was passing.

"Ah, ha," said Aramis to Athos; "that young man is certainly a spy."

"What young man?" asked Lord de Winter, turning round.

"Why, he who followed us, who spoke to us, and who is now waiting for us yonder."

De Winter turned and looked in the direction Aramis pointed. The lantern illumined the little strait through which they were just about to pass, as well as the rock on which the young man was standing, with bare head and arms folded.

"It is he!" exclaimed Lord de Winter, seizing Athos's arm, — "it is he! I fancied that I saw him, and I was not mistaken."

"And who is he?" asked Aramis.

"Milady's son!" replied Athos.

"The monk!" cried Grimaud.

The young man heard these words. It even seemed as if he was going to throw himself over, so close did he stand to the very edge of the rock, bending over the sea.

"Yes, it is I, uncle, — I, Milady's son, — I, the monk, — I, the secretary and friend of Cromwell! And I know you — you and your companions."

There were in that boat three men who were certainly brave, and whose courage no one would have dared to impugn; yet at that voice, at that accent, at that gesture, they felt the cold shudder of terror run through their veins. And Grimaud's hair actually bristled on his head, and the perspiration trickled from his brow.

"Ah!" said Aramis, "is that your nephew, is that the monk, *is that* Milady's son, as he says?"

"Alas! it is so," murmured De Winter.

"Well, then, wait," said Aramis.

And with that terrible coolness which he exhibited on all great emergencies, he seized one of the muskets that Tony held, cocked it, and took a steady aim at the man, who remained standing on the rock like the angel of malediction.

"Fire!" cried Grimaud, carried away by his feelings.

Athos threw himself on the barrel of the musket and prevented the shot being fired.

"The devil take you!" cried Aramis; "I had him completely at my mercy! I should have hit him full in the heart."

"It is quite enough to have killed the mother," said Athos in a hollow voice.

"The mother was a wretch, who had attacked us all, either personally or through those we loved."

"Yes, but the son has not injured us in any manner."

Grimaud, who had risen to see the effect of the shot, fell back in utter despair, clasping his hands.

The young man burst into a fit of laughter.

"Ah, and it is really you!" he cried; "it is really you! Now I know you!"

His harsh laugh and threatening words passed over the boat, borne along by the breeze, and were lost amid the deep shades of the horizon.

Aramis shuddered.

"Be calm," said Athos. "What! are we no longer men?"

"Yes," replied Aramis; "but that is a demon; and just ask the uncle if I should have been wrong in relieving him of his dear nephew."

De Winter only answered by a sigh.

"All would have been over," continued Aramis. "Ah! I much fear, Athos, that you made me do a foolish thing, with your wisdom."

Athos took Lord de Winter's hand, and, endeavouring to turn the conversation: "When shall we reach England?" he asked.

But Lord de Winter did not hear his words, and did not reply.

"Here, Athos," said Aramis, "perhaps there would still be time. See, he is still in the same place."

Athos turned with reluctance. The sight of this young man was evidently painful to him. In fact, he was still stand-

ing on the rock, the light from the lantern forming a sort halo around him.

"But what is he doing at Boulogne?" demanded Athc who, being so deep a reasoner, always sought for the cau caring but little about the effect.

"He was following me — he was following me," said I Winter, who this time heard Athos's voice, which now c responded with his thoughts.

"To follow you, my friend," said Athos, "it would ha been necessary for him to be aware of our departure; a moreover, on the contrary, he in all probability preceded u

"Then I cannot understand anything about it," said t Englishman, shaking his head like a man who thinks it usele to endeavour to struggle against a supernatural power.

"Positively, Aramis," said Athos, "I begin to think that was wrong in not letting you do as you wished."

"Hold your tongue," said Aramis; "you would make n cry, if I could."

Grimaud emitted a dull, grumbling sound, like a roar.

At this moment the boat was hailed from the sloop. Th pilot, who was seated at the helm, replied, and the bo approached the vessel.

Men, lacqueys, and baggage were instantly on board. Th master was only waiting for his passengers to sail; an scarcely had they set foot on deck before the schooner's hea was turned toward Hastings, where they were to land.

At this moment the three friends involuntarily cast a las look at the rock, where the contour of the threatening shado that pursued them was still visibly defined.

Then a voice, even now, reached them, bearing with it thi last threat:

"We shall meet in England, gentlemen!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TE DEUM FOR THE VICTORY AT LENS.

All that commotion which Queen Henrietta had observed, and the cause of which she vainly sought, was occasioned by the tidings of the victory of Lens, of which M. le Prince had *made the Duc* de Chatillon the bearer. The Duke had dis-

tinguished himself greatly in the affair; and he was, besides, ordered to suspend from the ceiling of Notre Dame twenty-two standards taken from the Lorrainers and the Spaniards.

This news was decisive, and at once determined, in favour of the Court, the quarrel begun with the Parliament. All the imposts so summarily registered, and which the Parliament had opposed, had always been demanded for the ostensible purpose of upholding the honour of France, and with the fortuitous hope of beating the enemy. But since Nordlingen, the army had only met with reverses; and the Parliament had therefore openly questioned Mazarin respecting the victories so often promised, yet always deferred. Now, however, the troops had at last been engaged; they had triumphed, and their triumph was complete. So every one understood that this was a double victory for the Court — a victory in the interior as well as on the frontiers; so much so that even the young King, on hearing the news, exclaimed:

"Ah! gentlemen of the Parliament, we shall now see what you will say!"

Whereupon the Queen pressed to her bosom the royal child, whose haughty and indomitable sentiments accorded so well with her own. A council was held the same evening, to which Marshal de la Meilleraie and M. de Villeroy had been summoned, because they adhered to Mazarin; Chavigny and Seguier, because they hated the Parliament; and Guitaut and Comminges, because they were devoted to the Queen.

The decision of the council had not transpired. It was only known that on the following Sunday a *Te Deum* would be chanted at Notre Dame to celebrate the victory of Lens.

On the following Sunday, therefore, the Parisians awoke in high spirits. A *Te Deum* was, at that time, a grand affair; this kind of ceremony had not then been abused, and it was effective. The sun seemed to share in the festival; it rose brilliantly and gilded the dark towers of the metropolis, already filled with an immense multitude of people; the most obscure streets of the City had assumed a holiday air, and all along the quays, endless throngs of citizens and artisans, of women and children, were seen going toward Notre Dame, like a river rushing back to its source.

The shops were deserted, the houses were shut; every one wished to see the young King and his mother, and the famous

Cardinal Mazarin, whom they hated so much that no o liked to miss seeing him.

Besides, the greatest liberty reigned amid this vast assei blage. Every tone of opinion was openly expressed, and, so speak, rang insurrection even as the thousand bells of the Par ian churches rang for the *Te Deum*. The police being und the control of the City itself, nothing threatening disturb the concert of universal hatred, or froze the bitter words slanderous mouths.

Nevertheless, at eight o'clock in the morning the regime of the Queen's Guards, commanded by Guitaut, with Co minges, his nephew, as his lieutenant, had, with drums a trumpets at their head, been drawn up *en échelon* from t Palais Royal to Notre Dame — a manœuvre which the Par ians had regarded with tranquillity, for they always delight military music and glittering uniforms.

Friquet was in his Sunday best; and under the pretence of inflammatory swelling, which he had brought about temporari by introducing a vast number of cherry-stones into one corner his mouth, he had obtained from Bazin, his superior, leave absence for the whole day.

Bazin had at first refused this leave, for Bazin was in b humour: first, because Aramis had departed without telli him where he was going; and, next, because he was to atte a Mass celebrated on account of a victory that did not acco with his own opinions. Bazin was a Frondeur, it must remembered; and if there had been any means by which t absence of a beadle could have been as easily effected as th of a simple choir boy on such a solemn occasion, he would c tainly have sent a request to the Archbishop similar to th which had just been made to himself. He had, therefore, we have said, at first refused Friquet's application; but t inflammatory swelling had, even in Bazin's presence, increas so much in size that, for the honour of the body of choir bo which would have been compromised by such a deformity, had finally given a grumbling assent. At the church door F quet had spit out his inflammatory swelling, and, at the sa time, made in Bazin's direction one of those impudent gestur that establish the superiority of the Parisian gamin to a the gamins in the universe. His duties at the tavern he h naturally enough got rid of by alleging that he was serving *a Mass at Notre Dame.*

So Friquet was free, and, as we have said, had clothed himself in his most sumptuous garb; he had, more especially, as a remarkable ornament of his person, one of those indescribable caps which hold an intermediate rank between the bonnet of the middle age and the hat of Louis XIII. This curious headpiece had been fabricated for him by his mother, who either from caprice or from a want of uniform materials, had, in making it, shown herself so slightly attached to the harmony of colours that this masterpiece of the haberdashery of the seventeenth century was yellow and green on one side, and white and red on the other. But Friquet, who had always loved variety in tones, was only the more proud of it, and the more triumphant.

On leaving Bazin, Friquet set off, as hard as he could run, toward the Palais Royal, which he reached just as the regiment of Guards was coming out; and as he went expressly to enjoy the sight and to hear the music, he took his place at their head, beating the time with two pieces of slate, and occasionally changing from this exercise to that of the trumpet, which he imitated naturally with his mouth — in such a way, indeed, as had more than once gained for him praises from lovers of imitative harmony.

This amusement lasted from the Barrier des Sergents to the Place Notre Dame, and Friquet thoroughly enjoyed it. But when the regiment halted, and the companies, in opening out, penetrated even to the heart of the City, resting on the end of the Rue Saint Christophe, almost to the Rue Cocatrix, where Broussel lived, then Friquet, remembering that he had not breakfasted, began to consider in what direction he could best turn in order to accomplish this important business of the day; and having reflected seriously, he decided that the Councillor Brousell should bear the expense of his repast.

Consequently, away he went, reached the councillor's door quite out of breath, and knocked loudly.

His mother, Broussel's old servant, opened the door.

"What are you doing here, you good-for-nothing?" said she, "and why are you not at Notre Dame?"

"I was there, Mère Nanette." said Friquet, "but I saw that some things were taking place that our Master Broussel ought to know, and with M. Bazin's leave — you know M. Bazin, the beadle, Mère Nanette? — I am come to speak with M. Broussel."

"And what do you want to say to M. Broussel, you booby?

"I wish to speak to him myself."

"That is impossible; he is busy."

"Then I will wait," said Friquet, whom this plan suited a the better, as he would take care to make good use of hi time.

And he climbed the stairs rapidly, while Dame Nanette fo lowed him more slowly.

"But, tell me, what do you want with M. Broussel?" sai she.

"I want to tell him," replied Friquet, bawling as loud as h could, "that the whole regiment of Guards is come into thi quarter. Now, as I have everywhere heard that there is ill will against him at Court, I came to warn him, that he ma put himself upon his guard."

Broussel heard the young rascal's loud voice, and, delighte at his excess of zeal, he came down to the first story; for h really was at work in his cabinet on the second floor.

"Ah, my friend," said he, "what is the regiment of Guard to us? and are you not a simpleton to make such a fuss? D you not know that it is usual to act as these gentlemen ar doing, and that this regiment always lines the King's route?"

Friquet feigned astonishment, and twisting his new cap i his hands, he said:

"It is not surprising that you know this, M. Broussel, — you who know everything; but in God's truth I didn't know it I thought I was giving you some good advice; you ought not t be angry with me for it, Monsieur Broussel."

"Quite the contrary, my boy, quite the contrary; and you zeal pleases me. Dame Nanette, look for some of those apri cots that Madame de Longueville sent us yesterday from Noisy and give half a dozen of them, with a slice of nice bread, t your son."

"Ah! thank you, Monsieur Broussel," said Friquet, "thank you; I am very fond of apricots."

Broussel then went to his wife and called for breakfast. It was half-past nine. The councillor took his place near the window. The street was completely deserted; but at a distance was heard, like the noise of the rising tide, the vast murmur of the popular waves, which were already accumulating round Notre Dame.

This noise redoubled when D'Artagnan came with a com-

pany of Musketeers, and stood at the doors of Notre Dame to guard the service of the church. He had told Porthos to take advantage of the opportunity to witness the ceremony; and Porthos, in grand costume and mounted on his handsomest horse, was doing the part of an honorary Musketeer, as D'Artagnan himself had formerly done. The sergeant of this company, an old soldier of the Spanish wars, who had recognised in Porthos an ancient comrade, had soon imparted to those under his command the wonderful exploits of this giant, the pride of M. de Tréville's ancient Musketeers. Porthos had, therefore, not only been well received by the company, but had even been regarded with admiration.

At ten o'clock the cannon of the Louvre announced the King's departure. A movement, like that of trees the tops of which are bent and tossed by a strong wind, ran through the multitude, which waved backward and forward behind the motionless muskets of the Guards. At last the King appeared, with the Queen, in a gilded carriage. Ten other carriages followed, filled with the ladies of honour, the officers of the royal household, and the whole Court.

"Vive le roi!" was the universal cry.

The young King gravely put his head out of the coach door, looked sufficiently grateful, and even bowed slightly; this caused the shouts of the multitude to redouble.

The procession advanced very slowly, and took nearly half an hour to pass over the distance between the Louvre and the Place Notre Dame. Having reached this spot, it gradually entered beneath the vast roof of the sombre cathedral, and the solemn service began.

Just as the Court was taking its place, a carriage with the arms of Comminges left the line of the Court carriages and came slowly to the end of the now deserted Rue Saint Christophe, where it stopped. Here four Guards and an officer, who escorted it, entered the cumbrous vehicle and closed its blinds; then through a chink, carefully arranged, the officer began to look down the Rue Cocatrix, as if he expected some one.

Every one was occupied with the ceremony, so that neither the carriage nor the precautions taken by those who were in it were observed. Friquet, with ever-watchful eye, the only one who could have got hold of the mystery, had gone to eat his apricots on the cornice of a house fronting Notre Dame,

from there he saw the King, the Queen, and Mazarin, and heard the Mass as well as if he had been taking part in it.

Toward the end of the service, the Queen, seeing that Comminges was standing near, waiting for the confirmation of an order that she had already given him before leaving the Louvre, said to him in a low voice:

"Go, Comminges, and may God prosper you!"

Comminges immediately left the church and went down the Rue Saint Christophe.

Friquet, who saw this handsome official marching along followed by two Guards, amused himself by following him; and he did this with greater pleasure, as the ceremony was just ending and the King was returning to his carriage.

Scarcely had the officer seen Comminges make his appearance at the end of the street before he gave an order to the coachman, who instantly set his machine in motion and stopped it in front of Broussel's house.

Comminges knocked at the door at the same moment as the carriage stopped at it.

Friquet waited behind Comminges for the opening of the door.

"What are you doing here, you rascal?" asked Comminges.

"I am waiting to go into Maître Broussel's, officer," replied Friquet, in that tone of simplicity which a Parisian gamin knows so well how to assume when it suits his purpose.

"Then he really lives here?" said Comminges.

"Yes, sir."

"And which story does he occupy?"

"The whole house," replied Friquet; "the house is his own."

"But where does he generally stay?"

"When he is working he is mostly on the second story; but he goes down to the first floor to take his meals; and at this time he must be at dinner, for it is twelve o'clock."

"Good," said Comminges.

At this moment the door was opened. The officer questioned the lacquey, and learned that Maître Broussel was at home, and was, in fact, at dinner. Comminges therefore went up behind the lacquey, and Friquet went up behind Comminges.

Broussel was seated at table with his family, having his wife opposite him, his two daughters one on each side of him, and at the end of the table his son Louvières. The councillor, by

the way, was entirely recovered from his accident. The good man, restored to perfect health, was tasting the fine fruit that Madame de Longueville had sent him.

Comminges, having stopped the lacquey from announcing him, opened the door himself, and found himself in the presence of this family party.

On seeing the officer, Broussel felt himself somewhat agitated; but observing that he bowed politely, he arose and bowed also.

Nevertheless, in spite of this reciprocal politeness, anxiety was painted on the faces of the women. Louvières turned very pale, and waited impatiently for the officer's explanation.

"Sir," said Comminges, "I am the bearer of an order from the King."

"Very well, sir," said Broussel; "what is the order?"

And he held out his hand.

"I am ordered to arrest you, sir," replied Comminges, in the same tone, with the same politeness; "and if you will believe me you will spare yourself the trouble of reading this long letter, and will follow me."

Had a thunderbolt fallen into the midst of these good people, so peaceably met together, it could not have produced a more terrible effect. Broussel drew back, all of a tremble. It was a fearful thing, at that period, to be imprisoned through the King's enmity. Louvières made a motion as if to procure his sword, which was on a chair in the corner of the room; but a glance from the good man Broussel's eye, who, in the midst of all this, did not lose his presence of mind, stopped this act of desperation. Madame Broussel, who was separated from her husband by the breadth of the table, burst into tears, and the young girls held their father in their arms.

"Come, sir," said Comminges, "let us make haste; the King must be obeyed."

"Sir," replied Broussel, "I am in bad health; I cannot yield myself a prisoner in this state. I ask for time."

"It is impossible," replied Comminges; "the order is positive, and must be executed immediately."

"Impossible?" exclaimed Louvières. "Take care, sir, that you do not drive us to desperation."

"Impossible?" cried a shrill voice at the end of the room.

Comminges turned and saw Dame Nanette, with her broom in her hand and her eyes blazing with anger.

"My good Nanette," said Broussel, "be quiet now, I beg of you."

"I? I keep myself quiet when they are arresting my master, the support, the liberator, the father of the good people! Ah! yes, indeed; you know me well enough. Will you be gone?" said she to Comminges.

Comminges smiled.

"Come, sir," said he, turning toward Broussel, "silence this woman and follow me."

"Silence me! — me! — me!" cried Nanette; "ah! yes, indeed; but it would require some one rather better than you, my fine King's-bird. You shall soon see!"

And Dame Nanette rushed to the window, opened it, and in a voice so piercing that it could be heard in the square in front of Notre Dame:

"Help!" cried she; "they are arresting my master! They are arresting the councillor Broussel! Help! help!"

"Sir," said Comminges, "tell me immediately — will you obey, or do you resist the King's orders?"

"I obey, I obey, sir," cried Broussel, endeavouring to release himself from his daughters' arms, and, by his look, to check his son, who was every moment ready to escape from him.

"In that case," said Comminges, "silence that old woman."

"Ah! old woman indeed," screamed Nanette.

And clinging to the bars of the window, she continued to scream, "Help! help for Maître Broussel! They are arresting him because he stood by the people! Help!"

Comminges seized the servant and tried to force her from her post; but at this moment another voice, issuing from a sort of entresol, screamed in a falsetto tone:

"Murder! fire! assassins! They are killing M. Broussel! They are murdering M. Broussel!"

It was Friquet's voice. Dame Nanette, finding herself supported, renewed her cries with increased vigor, and joined in chorus.

Faces, attracted by curiosity, began to appear at the windows. The people, attracted to the end of the street, came running up: first one or two men; then groups; then a crowd. They heard the cries, they saw the carriage, but they did not understand. Friquet jumped from the entresol to the hood of the coach.

"They are trying to arrest M. Broussel!" he cried; "there are Guards in the carriage, and the officer is upstairs."

The crowd began to murmur, and surrounded the horses. The two Guards who had remained in the passage now went up to assist Comminges ; those who were in the coach opened the doors and crossed their pikes.

"There, do you see them?" cried Friquet; "do you see them? There they are!"

The coachman turned and gave Friquet a cut with his whip that made him howl with pain.

"Ah, you devil's coachman," cried Friquet, "you meddle in this, do you! Just wait."

And he regained his entresol, from which he assailed the coachman with all the projectiles he could find.

In spite of the hostile demonstrations of the Guards, and perhaps on account of them, the people began to grumble, and went up to the horses; but the Guards drove back the most violent by blows with their pikes.

Meantime the tumult continued to increase, and soon the street could no longer contain the spectators, who flocked from every quarter. The crowd began to take possession of the space which the formidable pikes of the Guards had formed between them and the coach. The soldiers, hemmed in as if by a living wall, were just going to be crushed against the naves of the wheels and panels of the coach — the cries of "In the King's name!" twenty times repeated by the officer had had no effect upon this formidable crowd, which it appeared, indeed, only to exasperate the more — when at the cry of "In the King's name!" a cavalier hastened up, and seeing the uniforms ill-treated he threw himself into the fray, sword in hand, and brought the Guards unlooked-for aid.

This cavalier was a young man of fifteen or sixteen, pale with anger. He dismounted, like the other Guards, set his back against the pole of the carriage, made a rampart of his horse, drew his pistols from his holster, put them into his girdle, and then began to lay about him like a man to whom the use of the sword is familiar.

For ten minutes, alone and unsupported, he resisted every attack of the crowd.

Comminges was then seen pushing Broussel before him.

"Let us break the carriage to pieces!" cried the people.

"Help!" screamed Nanette.

"Murder!" cried Friquet, continuing to shower down on the Guards everything he could find.

"In the King's name!" exclaimed Comminges.

"The first man who advances is dead!" cried Raoul, who, finding himself much pressed upon, permitted a sort of giant, who was about to crush him, to taste the point of his sword, and who, feeling himself wounded, fell back howling dismally.

For it was Raoul, who, just returned from Blois, as he had promised the Comte de la Fère, after an absence of five days, had wished to have a glance at the ceremony, and had taken the streets that would lead him more directly to Notre Dame. When he had reached the entrance of the Rue Cocatrix, he had been carried along by the crowd; and at the cry of "In the King's name!" he had remembered Athos's words—"Serve the King," and had run to fight for the King, whose Guards were being ill-treated.

Comminges, as it were, flung Broussel into the carriage and darted in after him. At this moment a shot was fired, a ball passed through Comminges's hat and broke the arm of one of the Guards. Comminges looked up, and, in the midst of the smoke, saw the threatening face of Louvières looking out of the second-story window.

"Very well, sir," cried Comminges; "you will hear of me again!"

"And you also, sir," replied Louvières, "and we will then see who speaks the louder!"

Friquet and Nanette still continued their screaming. Their cries, the noise of the shot, the smell of the powder, always so intoxicating, produced their effect.

"Death to the officer — death!" shouted the crowd.

And there was a fearful movement.

"One step more," exclaimed Comminges, raising the blinds, that every one might see into the carriage, and putting his sword to Broussel's breast, — "one step more, and I kill the prisoner! I am ordered to carry him away, alive or dead. I will take him away dead, that 's all!"

A terrible cry was heard. The wife and daughters of Broussel stretched out their supplicating hands to the people.

The people understood that this officer, so pale, yet who appeared so resolute, would do what he said. Consequently, though they continued to threaten, they drew back.

Comminges took the wounded Guard into the carriage, and ordered the others to shut the door.

"To the palace!" said he to the coachman, who was more dead than alive.

He whipped his horses, which cleared a broad space in the crowd; but on reaching the quay, they were obliged to stop; the carriage was upset and the horses carried off, overpowered and bruised by the crowd.

Raoul, on foot, — for he had not had time to remount his horse, — tired of dealing blows with the flat of his sword, as the Guards were doing with theirs, began to use the point; but this terrible and last resource only exasperated the multitude. From time to time, also, the barrel of a carbine or the blade of a sword began to shine in the midst of the crowd. Some gun-shots were also heard, doubtless fired in the air, but their echoes did not make the heart vibrate any the less; and projectiles continued to be showered from the windows, while voices were heard that are heard only in times of insurrection, and countenances were seen that are seen only in days of bloodshed. The cries of "Death! death to the Guards!" "To the Seine with the officer!" rose above all the tumult, vast as it was.

Raoul, his hat battered in and his face smeared with blood, felt that not only his strength, but his senses, began to fail him. A reddish mist swam before his eyes; and through this mist he saw a hundred arms stretched toward him, ready to seize him when he fell. Comminges was tearing his hair with rage in the overturned carriage. The Guards, engaged as they were in defending their own persons, could assist no one. All was nearly over: carriage, horses, Guards, attendants, nay, perhaps even the prisoner himself, — all were about to be torn to pieces, when suddenly a well-known voice sounded in Raoul's ears, when all at once a large sword was seen flashing in the air; at the same instant the crowd gave way, torn, overthrown, and crushed; an officer of the Musketeers, cutting and slashing right and left, galloped up to Raoul and caught him in his arms just as he was falling.

"Sandieu!" cried the officer, "have they murdered him? The worse for them, if they have!"

And he turned round, so formidable in his strength, his rage, and his threatening appearance, that even the most violent of the rebels ran over one another to escape him, and some even rolled into the Seine.

"M. d'Artagnan!" murmured Raoul.

"Yes, Sandieu! my own self, and luckily for you, it seems to me, my young friend. Here! you there!" he cried out, standing up in his stirrups and raising his sword as he beckoned to his Musketeers, who had not been able to follow him, so impetuous had been his course, — "come! sweep me away all this scum! To your muskets, men! Make ready, aim" —

At this command, the mountains of people gave way so suddenly that D'Artagnan could not restrain a Homeric burst of laughter.

"Thank you, D'Artagnan," said Comminges, showing half his body out of the door of the prostrate carriage; "thank you also, young gentleman. Give me your name, that I may report it to the Queen."

Raoul was about to reply, when D'Artagnan whispered to him. "Hold your tongue," said he; "let me answer."

Then turning towards Comminges:

"Lose no time, Comminges," he continued; "get out of the carriage if you can, and get another."

"But where am I to find one?"

"Pardieu! take the first that may happen to pass over the Pont-Neuf; any one who may be in it will be only too happy, I hope, to lend their carriage for the King's service."

"But," said Comminges, "I do not know" —

"Go along, then, or in five minutes all these mad fools will return with swords and muskets, you will be killed and your prisoner rescued. Go! And see — yonder comes a carriage."

Then leaning down again to Raoul: "By no means tell him your name," he whispered.

The youth looked at him with an air of astonishment.

"Very well, I am off," said Comminges; "and should they return, fire upon them."

"No, no," answered D'Artagnan; "on the contrary, let no one stir; one shot fired now would be dearly paid for to-morrow."

Comminges took his four Guards, and the same number of Musketeers, and ran to the carriage. He made those who were in it get out, and brought it up to the broken vehicle.

But when, in removing Broussel from the one to the other, the people saw him whom they called their liberator, they uttered terrible cries and again rushed toward the carriage.

"Be off with you!" said D'Artagnan. "Here are ten Musketeers to attend you, and I will keep twenty to check

he people. Be off, and do not lose a single instant. Ten ien for Monsieur de Comminges!"

Ten men detached themselves from the troop, surrounded ie carriage, and set off at a gallop.

At the departure of the carriage the cries were redoubled. Fore than ten thousand people were assembled on the quay, locking up the Pont-Neuf and the adjacent streets.

Some shots were fired. A Musketeer was wounded.

"Forward!" cried D'Artagnan, driven beyond patience, id biting his mustache. And with his twenty men he made ich a charge upon the people as overthrew them in utter con-ision and dismay.

One man alone kept his ground, with an arquebus in his and.

"Ah!" said that man, "it was you who before wanted to urder him! Wait!"

And he lowered his arquebus at D'Artagnan, who was com-ig on at full gallop.

D'Artagnan bent down to his horse's neck. The young an fired: the ball cut the plume of his hat. The horse, ounding forward at full speed, struck against this rash indi-dual, who thus singly endeavoured to stay the tempest, and nt him staggering against the wall.

D'Artagnan pulled his horse up on his haunches, and while is Musketeers continued their charge, he returned, with his vord raised over him whom he had overthrown.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed Raoul, who recognised the young man om having seen him in the Rue Cocatrix, "spare him, sir, r it is his son!"

D'Artagnan held his arm, about to strike.

"Ah! you are his son," said he; "that's quite another ing."

"I surrender, sir," said Louvières, holding out his dis-arged arquebus to the officer.

"Eh! No, do not give yourself up; on the contrary, off ith you, and that quickly. If I take you, you will certainly hanged."

The young man did not wait to be told twice; he slipped ider the horse's neck, and disappeared at the corner of the ue Guénégaud.

"Faith," said D'Artagnan to Raoul, "it was time for you to op my hand; in another moment he would have been a dead

man; and, by my faith, when I had learnt who it was I should have been sorry that I had killed him."

"Ah, sir," said Raoul, "allow me, after having thanked you for this poor fellow, to thank you for myself; for I also was just about to be killed when you arrived."

"Wait, wait, young man, and do not fatigue yourself with talking." Then drawing a flask of Spanish wine from one of his holsters:

"There," said he, "drink a couple of mouthfuls of this."

Raoul drank, and wished to repeat his thanks.

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan, "we will talk about that by and by."

Then, seeing that the Musketeers had cleared the quay from the Pont-Neuf to the Quay Saint Michel, and that they were returning, he raised his sword for them to quicken their pace.

The Musketeers came up at a trot; and at the same time, from the other side of the quay, the ten men whom D'Artagnan had sent as the escort of Comminges were seen returning.

"Holà!" cried he to the latter, "did anything fresh happen?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant; "the carriage broke down again; it was a regular fatality."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders.

"They are awkward fellows," said he. "When one chooses a coach it ought to be a strong one; the coach with which a Broussel is arrested should be able to carry ten thousand men."

"What are your orders, lieutenant?"

"Take the detachment and lead it to quarters."

"But will you retire alone?"

"Certainly; do you suppose that I need an escort?"

"But, nevertheless" —

"Go."

The Musketeers departed, and D'Artagnan remained alone with Raoul.

"Now, are you in pain?" said he to him.

"Yes, sir; my head is heavy and burning."

"Come, let us see what is the matter with your head," said D'Artagnan, raising his hat. "Aha! a contusion."

"Yes, I believe that I received a flower-pot on my head."

'The curs!" said D'Artagnan. "But you have got spurs — were you on horseback?"

'Yes; but I dismounted to defend M. de Comminges, and horse was captured. But look, there he is!"

In fact, at that moment Raoul's horse passed by with quet on his back, galloping along, waving his four-coloured and crying out:

'Broussel! Broussel!"

'Holà! stop, you rascal!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "and ng that horse here."

Friquet heard well enough, but he pretended not to hear, l endeavoured to continue his course.

D'Artagnan had for a moment a great desire to ride after ster Friquet; but as he did not wish to leave Raoul alone, contented himself with drawing a pistol from his holsters l cocking it.

Friquet had a quick eye and a sharp ear; he saw D'Artaan's movement and heard the sound of the lock; he theree suddenly drew up his horse.

'Ah! it is you, officer," said he, coming up to D'Artagnan; am really very glad to meet you again."

D'Artagnan looked earnestly at Friquet, and recognised the le waiter of the Rue de la Calandre.

'Ah! is it you, young rascal?" said he. "Come here."

'Yes, it is me, officer," replied Friquet, with his innocent k.

'Have you changed your employment? You are no longer her a choir boy or a tavern waiter? You have become a rse thief?"

'Ah, officer, how can you say so?" cried Friquet; "I s looking for the gentleman to whom the horse belongs — handsome cavalier, brave as Cæsar." (He then pretended see Raoul for the first time.) "Ah! well, surely I am t mistaken," he continued, "there is the gentleman, do declare. You will remember the boy, will you not, ?"

Raoul put his hand into his pocket.

"What are you going to do?" said D'Artagnan.

"To give ten livres to this excellent boy," replied Raoul, awing a pistole from his pocket.

"Ten kicks!" said D'Artagnan. "Be off with you, you ung scoundrel, and remember that I have your address."

Friquet, who did not expect to get off so easily, made but one jump from the quay to the Rue Dauphine, where he vanished. Raoul mounted his horse, and they both went at a slow pace, D'Artagnan guarding the youth, as if he had been his own son, toward the Rue Tiquetonne.

All the way there were many low mumurs and distant threats; but at the sight of the officer, with his military aspect, and his powerful sword suspended from his wrist by its thong, the crowd gave way, and no serious attack was made on the two horsemen.

They reached the Hôtel de la Chevrette without accident.

The fair Madeline informed D'Artagnan that Planchet was returned, accompanied by Mousqueton, who had borne the extraction of the ball most heroically, and was as well as could be expected.

D'Artagnan then ordered Planchet to be called; but Planchet did not respond to these calls; he had disappeared.

"Some wine, then," said D'Artagnan.

When the wine was brought and D'Artagnan was alone with Raoul:

"You are mighty well satisfied with yourself, are you not?" said he, looking hard at him.

"Why, yes," replied Raoul, "it appears to me that I have done my duty. Have I not defended the King?"

"And who told you to defend the King?"

"M. le Comte de la Fère himself."

"Yes, the King. But this day you have not defended the King — you have defended Mazarin, which is not the same thing."

"But, sir" —

"You have done a very foolish thing, young man, — you have interfered in matters which did not concern you."

"Nevertheless, you yourself" —

"Oh, I! That is quite another thing; I have obeyed my captain's orders. Your captain is M. le Prince; understand this well — you have no other. But did any one see this giddy pate," continued D'Artagnan, "who must go and make himself a Mazarinist, and help to arrest Broussel! Do not breathe a word of this on any account, or M. le Comte de la Fère would be furious."

"Why, do you think that the Count would be angry with me, sir?"

"Do I think it? I am quite sure of it; otherwise I should ank you, for you have been working for us. Therefore it is at I scold you at this time and place; the storm, believe me, ill be more gentle.. Besides, my dear boy," added D'Arta- ıan, "I make use of the privilege that your guardian has anted me."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Raoul.

D'Artagnan arose, went to his desk, took out a letter and ıve it to Raoul.

When Raoul had run over its contents, his face clouded. Oh, mon Dieu!" said he, raising his fine eyes, moist with ars, to D'Artagnan's; "so the Count has left Paris without dding me farewell?"

"He left four days ago," replied D'Artagnan.

"But the letter indicates that he is running the risk of ath."

"Risk of death! You may make yourself quite easy on that ore. No; he is gone on business, and will soon return. In e meantime I hope you have no objection to accept me as ur guardian for the time being?"

"Oh, no, M. d'Artagnan, — you are so brave and the Count ves you so dearly!"

"Well, then, mon Dieu! you must love me too. I will not ague you much; but this is on condition that you remain a rondeur, my young friend, and a warm Frondeur too."

"But may I continue to see Madame de Chevreuse?"

"Most assuredly, mordieu! and the coadjutor and Madame Longueville also; and if the good man Broussel were there, hose arrest you so foolishly helped, I would say to you, Go ıd make your excuses to M. Broussel as quickly as you can, ıd kiss him on both cheeks."

"Well, sir, I will obey you, although I do not understand ou."

"There is no necessity for your understanding me. See," ıid D'Artagnan, turning to the door, which had just been ırown open, "here comes M. du Vallon, with his clothes torn."

"Yes," said Porthos, dripping with perspiration and covered ith dust, "but in exchange I have torn a good many skins. hose rascals wanted to take away my sword. Peste! what riot!" continued the giant, with his tranquil air; "but I ettled more than twenty of them with the pommel of Bal- ırde. A thimbleful of wine, D'Artagnan!"

"Oh, I will answer for you!" said the Gascon; "fill Porthos's glass to the brim. But when you have drunk, I want your opinion."

Porthos tossed off the glass of wine, and when he had replaced the glass on the table and sucked his mustache:

"On what?" said he.

"Why," replied D'Artagnan, "here is M. de Bragelonne, who wanted to assist in the arrest of M. Broussel with all his might, and whom I had great difficulty in preventing from defending M. Comminges."

"Peste!" said Porthos; "and what would his guardian say if he heard this?"

"There, do you hear?" broke in D'Artagnan. "Be a Frondeur, my friend; and remember that I am the Count's representative in everything."

And he shook his purse.

Then turning to his companion, "Are you coming, Porthos?" said he.

"Where?" demanded Porthos, pouring out another glass of wine.

"To pay our respects to the Cardinal."

Porthos swallowed the second glass with the same serenity that he had swallowed the first, took up his hat that he had laid upon a chair, and followed D'Artagnan.

Raoul, astounded at what he had seen, remained, D'Artagnan having forbidden him to leave the room until all the commotion was appeased.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE MENDICANT OF ST. EUSTACHE.

In not going immediately to the Palais Royal D'Artagnan ted advisedly; he had allowed Comminges ample time to ecede him there, and, consequently, to inform the Cardinal the eminent services which he and his friend had that morn- rendered the Queen's party.

So both of them were well received by Mazarin, who paid im many compliments, and told them that each of them was ire than half way to the accomplishment of his object — that to say, D'Artagnan's captaincy, Porthos's barony.

D'Artagnan would have much preferred ready money to all s, for he well knew Mazarin was liberal enough of his omises, but slow in performance. He therefore considered ese promises as meagre fare, but he did not appear the less isfied in Porthos's presence, for he did not wish to discour- e him.

While the two friends were with the Cardinal, the Queen it for him. The Cardinal thought that it would redouble e zeal of his two defenders if he were to procure for them e Queen's personal thanks; so he beckoned to them to follow n. D'Artagnan and Porthos pointed to their torn and dusty thes, but the Cardinal shook his head.

"These garments," said he, "are of more value than those most of the courtiers you will find with the Queen, for they e battle costumes."

D'Artagnan and Porthos obeyed.

The Court of Anne of Austria was well attended and in ex- lent spirits; for after gaining a victory over the Spaniards, ey had in reality just won another over the people. Broussel d been carried out of Paris without resistance, and by this ne was probably in the prison of St. Germain; and Blanc- esnil, who had been arrested at the same time, but without sturbance or difficulty, was enrolled amongst the inmates of e Château of Vincennes.

Comminges was close to the Queen, who was questioning him to the particulars of his expedition; and every one was tening to his recital, when he perceived D'Artagnan and

Porthos at the door, and behind the Cardinal who was just entering.

"Ah, madame," said he, hastening up to D'Artagnan, "here is one who can tell you this better than I can, for he is my preserver. Had it not been for him I should probably at this very moment be caught in the nets at Saint Cloud; for they threatened nothing less than to throw me into the river. Speak, D'Artagnan, speak!"

Since he had been lieutenant of Musketeers, D'Artagnan had been perhaps a hundred times in the same room with the Queen, but never had she spoken to him.

"Well, sir," said she, "after having rendered me such a service, are you silent?"

"Madame," replied D'Artagnan, "I have nothing to say, except that my life is at your Majesty's service, and that I shall only be too happy in sacrificing it for you."

"I know that, sir," said the Queen; "I have known it for a long time. I am therefore delighted at the opportunity of giving you this public mark of my esteem and gratitude."

"Permit me, madame," said D'Artagnan, "to transfer a portion of it to my friend, like myself [he emphasized these words] a former Musketeer of M. de Tréville's company. He has been accomplishing marvels!"

"What is his name?" asked the Queen.

"In the Musketeers he was called Porthos [the Queen started], but his real name is the Chevalier du Vallon."

"De Bracieux de Pierrefonds," added Porthos.

"These names are too numerous for me to remember them all, and I only wish to recollect the first," said the Queen graciously.

Porthos bowed. D'Artagnan stepped back two paces.

At this moment the coadjutor was announced.

There was an exclamation of surprise in the royal assembly. Although the coadjutor had preached that morning, it was well known that he had a strong leaning toward the Fronde; and Mazarin, by requesting the Archbishop of Paris to make his nephew preach, had evidently meant to give M. de Retz one of those sly Italian thrusts which so much delighted him.

In fact, on leaving Notre Dame the coadjutor had heard of what had happened. Although pretty well involved with the principal Frondeurs, he was not so much so but that he *could draw* back if the Court should offer the advancement of

ı he was ambitious, and to which the office of coadjutor ıut a stepping-stone. M. de Retz wished to succeed his uncle hbishop, and to be a cardinal, like Mazarin. Now, it was difficult for the popular party to grant him these truly favours, and so he betook himself to the palace to pay ɔmpliment to the Queen on the battle of Lens, but re- d beforehand to act for or against the Court, according at compliment was ill or well received.

e coadjutor was therefore announced. He entered, and s appearance the curiosity of all that triumphant Court bled to hear his words.

e coadjutor had, for his own share alone, pretty nearly as talent as was possessed by all those who were united to ı at him. Therefore his speech was so skilfully guarded whatever desire the courtiers had to laugh, they could find ng to lay hold of. He concluded by saying that he ɔd his feeble services to her Majesty.

e Queen appeared to be much pleased with the coadjutor's ıgue while it lasted; but the harangue having terminated the only phrase that gave scope for jibes, Anne turned l, and by an almost imperceptible glance of her eye rd her favourites, apprised them that she gave the coad- up to them. Instantly the wits of her Court began to h forth their satire. Nogent-Beautin, the buffoon of the ehold, exclaimed that the Queen was very fortunate in ıg the aids of religion at such a moment.

ery one burst into laughter.

e Comte de Villeroy declared that "he did not know any one could now entertain a moment's fear, since, to ıd the Court against the Parliament and the citizens of ı, they had the coadjutor, who, by a wave of his hand, . levy an army of curés, of Swiss, and of beadles."

e Maréchal de la Meilleraie added that "in case they to blows, and the coadjutor should himself be engaged, ıs very annoying that M. le Coadjutor could not be dis- ished in the battle by a red hat, as Henry IV. was, at the e of Ivry, by his white plume."

ndy remained calm and serene amid this storm, which he l so easily render deadly to the railers. The Queen then red if he had anything to add to the eloquent speech he just concluded.

Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor, "I have to en-

treat you to reflect twice before you excite a civil war in the realm."

The Queen turned her back upon him, and the laughter was renewed.

The coadjutor bowed and left the palace, bestowing on the Cardinal, who was looking at him, one of those glances that are well understood between mortal enemies. This glance was so bitter that it penetrated even to the heart of Mazarin, who, seeing that it was a declaration of war, seized D'Artagnan by the arm and said to him:

"On a proper occasion, sir, you would be able to recognise that man who is just gone out, would you not?"

"Yes, monsignor," he replied.

Then D'Artagnan, turning to Porthos, said: "The devil! This is a bad business; I do not like quarrels between Churchmen."

Gondy retired, scattering his benedictions on all he met as he went, and enjoying the malicious pleasure of making all, even the servants of his enemies, fall on their knees before him.

"Oh!" he muttered as he passed the threshold of the palace, "ungrateful Court! perfidious Court! cowardly Court! To-morrow I will make you laugh, but it will be in another tone!"

While the courtiers were giving vent to the extravagances of joy, in order to feed the Queen's hilarity, Mazarin, a man of sense, who had also all the prescience of fear, did not waste his time in vain and dangerous pleasantries. He had left the Court after the coadjutor, had balanced his accounts, locked up his money, and caused some secret hiding-places to be made in the walls by workmen in whom he could trust.

On returning home, the coadjutor was informed that a young man who had come in after his departure was still waiting for him. He inquired the name of this young man, and started with joy on learning that it was Louvières.

He immediately hastened to his cabinet, where he found Broussel's son, still furious and bloody from his struggle with the King's troops. The only precaution he had taken, in entering the archbishop's palace, was to leave his arquebus at the house of a friend.

The coadjutor went up to him and offered him his hand. The young man looked at him as if he wished to read the *inmost recesses* of his heart.

.y dear M. Louvières," said the coadjutor, "believe me
I sympathise sincerely with the misfortune that has
en you."
; that true, and do you speak seriously ?" asked Louvières.
rom the bottom of my heart," replied Gondy.
ı that case, monseigneur," said Louvières, "the time for
is past, and that for action has arrived. Monseigneur, if
'ish it my father will be out of prison in three days, and
months you will be a cardinal."
ɜ coadjutor started.
h, let us speak plainly," said Louvières; "let us play
ıll our cards on the table. No one scatters thirty thou-
crowns in alms, as you have done in the last six months,
pure Christian charity; that would be too exalted. You
mbitious — that is the simple fact; you are a man of
s and know your own value. I hate the Court, and at
resent moment I have but one sole desire — vengeance.
us the clergy and the people, whom you have at your
ɜal, and I will give you the citizens and the Parliament.
these four elements, in a week Paris will be ours; and,
'e me, Monsieur le Coadjuteur, the Court will give from
vhat it would not grant from favour."
ɜ coadjutor looked at Louvières with his piercing eye.
ut, Monsieur Louvières, do you know that it is simply
lainly civil war that you are proposing ?"
Conseigneur, you have been preparing for it long enough
ke it welcome whenever it comes."
'ever mind," said the coadjutor; "but you understand
this calls for reflection."
nd how many hours' reflection do you require ?"
welve — is that too long, sir ?"
t is now noon — at midnight I will come back."
f I should not be returned, wait for me."
'ery well. At midnight, monseigneur."
.t midnight, my dear Monsieur Louvières."
ıen alone, Gondy summoned all the curés with whom he
ıny connection. In two hours he had assembled thirty
of the most populous and, consequently, the most turbu-
ɔarishes of Paris. Gondy apprised them of the insult he
ust received at the Palais Royal, and repeated the jibes
ɔautin, of the Comte de Villeroy, and of Maréchal de la
.eraie. The curés inquired what was to be done.

"It is very simple," replied the coadjutor. "You direc the consciences. Well, then, undermine that wretched preju of fear and respect for kings; tell your flocks that the Q is a tyrant; and declare, so assiduously that all may kno that the misfortunes of France come from Mazarin, her l and corrupter. Begin your labours this very day — in instantaneously, and in three days I shall expect to learn results from you. Besides, if any one of you has any advice to give me, let him remain; I will listen to him pleasure."

Three of the curés remained — those of Saint Merri, of S Sulpice, and of Saint Eustache.

The others retired.

"So you think, do you, that you can aid me more ef ciously than your brethren?" asked De Gondy.

"We hope so," replied the curés.

"Come, then, let the minister of Saint Merri begin."

"Monseigneur, I have in my parish a man who migh most useful to you."

"Who is this man?"

"A shopkeeper in the Rue des Lombards, who has the g est influence over the little commercial body of his neighb hood."

"What is his name?"

"His name is Planchet. He alone raised a riot about weeks ago; but it was put down and they tried to find hi as to hang him. He disappeared."

"And can you find him again?"

"I hope so. I do not think that he was arrested; and am his wife's confessor, if she knows where he is I s ascertain it."

"Very well, Monsieur le Curé, hunt up this man for and if you find him bring him here."

"At what hour, monseigneur?"

"At six o'clock — will that do?"

"We will be with you at six o'clock, monseigneur."

"Go, my dear curé, go, and may God assist you!"

The curé left the room.

"And you, sir," said Gondy, turning to the curé of S Sulpice.

"Monseigneur," said he, "I know a man who has rende *great* services to a very popular prince; he would make

excellent leader of rebels, and I could place him at your disposal."

"And what is this man's name?"

"M. le Comte de Rochefort."

"I also know him; unfortunately he is not in Paris."

"Monseigneur, he is in the Rue Cassette."

"How long has he been there?"

"For three days."

"Why has he not been to see me?"

"They told him — will monseigneur pardon me?"

"Certainly; speak."

"That monseigneur was disposed to treat with the Court."

Gondy bit his lips.

"He was deceived," said he; "bring him here at eight o'clock, Monsieur le Curé; and may God bless you, as I do."

The second curé bowed and left the room.

"It is now your turn, sir," said the coadjutor, addressing the last that remained. "Have you as good advice to offer me as the two gentlemen who have just left us?"

"Better, monseigneur."

"Diable! Reflect that you are taking upon yourself a vast obligation. One has offered me a shopkeeper, the other a count: are you going to offer me a prince?"

"I am going to offer you a beggar, monseigneur."

"Aha!" said Gondy, reflecting; "you are right, M. le Curé, — some one who would excite all that legion of beggars who cumber the thoroughfares of Paris, and who would know how to make them cry, loud enough for all of France to hear them, that Mazarin has reduced them to beggary."

"Exactly so. I have your man."

"Bravo! And who is the man?"

"A simple mendicant, as I have told you, monseigneur, who for about six years has been begging while he distributes holy water on the steps of the church of Saint Eustache."

"And you say that he has a great influence over his fellows?"

"Is monseigneur aware that mendicancy is an organized body — a kind of association of those who possess nothing against those who possess something — an association in which each contributes a share, and which depends upon a chief?"

"Yes, I have heard so," replied the coadjutor.

"Well, then, this man of whom I speak is the syndic general."

"And what do you know of this man?"

"Nothing, monseigneur, except that he appears to be tormented by some remorse."

"What makes you think so?"

"On the 28th of every month he makes me say a Mass for the repose of the soul of some person who died a violent death; and yesterday I repeated that Mass."

"And his name is"—

"Maillard; but I think it is not his real name."

"And do you think that we should find him now at his post?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Come, then, let us see your mendicant, Monsieur le Curé; and if he is such as you represent him, you are right—you have found the real treasure.

And Gondy dressed himself as a cavalier, put on his head a wide hat with a red plume, girded a long sword to his loins, put spurs on his boots, wrapped an ample cloak around him, and followed the curé.

The coadjutor and his companion traversed all the streets that separated the archbishop's palace from the church of Saint Eustache, studying attentively the feelings of the populace. The people were certainly excited; but like a swarm of frightened bees, they appeared not to know where to settle; and it was evident that unless leaders were found for this people, all would pass off in murmurs.

On reaching the Rue des Prouvaires the curé pointed to the porch of the church.

"Look," said he; "there he is at his post."

Gondy looked at the spot indicated, and saw a poor man seated on a chair, with his back against one of the pillars. He had a little pail near him, and held a holy-water sprinkler in his hand.

"Is he privileged to sit there?" inquired Gondy.

"No, monseigneur," replied the curé; "he purchased from his predecessor the privilege of giving holy water."

"Bought it?"

"Yes; such places are purchased; and I believe that this man paid a hundred pistoles for his."

"So the rascal is rich?"

ome of these men leave, at their death, from twenty to
thousand livres, and even more."
lum!" said Gondy, laughing; "I did not imagine that
towed my alms so well."
the meantime they were approaching the porch. At
ioment that the coadjutor and the curé set foot on the
step of the church, the mendicant rose up and held out
oly-water sprinkler.
was a man of sixty-six or sixty-eight, short, rather stout,
grey hair and tawny eyes. In his face could be read the
of a struggle between two opposing principles — a bad
sition, subdued by the will or perhaps by repentance.
seeing the cavalier who accompanied the curé, he started
ly and looked at him with astonishment.
e curé and the coadjutor touched the holy water with the
f their fingers and made the sign of the cross; the coad-
threw a piece of money into the mendicant's hat, which
on the ground.
Maillard," said the curé, "this gentleman and I are come
lk a moment with you."
Vith me!" said the mendicant; "it is a great honour for
r holy-water giver."
ere was a tone of irony in the beggar's voice that he
not entirely suppress, and that surprised the coadjutor.
'es," said the curate, who appeared accustomed to that
t, — "yes, we wished to learn what you think about the
s that happened to-day, and what you have heard the
e say as they went in and out of the church."
e mendicant shook his head.
'hese are sad events, Monsieur le Curé, and they will, as
rs, fall on the poor people. As for what is said about it,
one is dissatisfied, every one complains; but what every
hinks no one says."
'xplain yourself, my dear friend," said the coadjutor.
say that all these cries, all these complaints, all these
s, will only produce storms and lightnings — that is all;
he thunder-bolt will never fall till there be a leader to
t it."
Ay friend," said Gondy, "you seem to me to be a clever
Would you be disposed to take part in a little civil war,
d we by chance have one, and to place at the disposal of

such a leader, should we find one, that personal power and influence which you have acquired over your comrades?"

"Yes, sir, provided the civil war you allude to were approved of by the Church, and, consequently, might conduct me to the end that I wish to attain — that is to say, the remission of my sins."

"This war will not only be approved of, but directed, by her," replied the coadjutor. "As for the remission of your sins, we have the Archbishop of Paris, who holds vast powers from the Court of Rome, and even the coadjutor, who possesses plenary indulgences. We will recommend you to him."

"Consider, Maillard," said the curé, "that it was I who recommended you to this gentleman, who is a powerful nobleman, and that I have in some measure answered for you."

"I know, Monsieur le Curé," replied the mendicant, "that you have always been an excellent friend to me; so I, on my part, am disposed to oblige you."

"And do you believe your power to be as great over your confreres as Monsieur le Curé told me awhile ago?"

"I think that they have a certain regard for me," said the mendicant, with pride; "and that not only will they do whatever I order them, but that they will follow me wherever I go."

"And can you answer for fifty resolute men, — good souls, idle and lively, — bawlers, capable of lowering the walls of the Palais Royal by crying, 'Down with Mazarin!' as the walls of Jericho fell in old times?"

"I believe," replied the mendicant, "that I might be trusted with much more difficult and more important things than that."

"Aha!" said Gondy; "would you undertake, then, to set up a dozen barricades or so in one night?"

"I would undertake to set up fifty, and, when daylight came, to defend them also."

"Pardieu!" said Gondy, "you speak with a confidence that delights me; and since the curé answers for you" —

"I answer for him," said the curé.

"Here is a bag containing five hundred gold pistoles; make all your plans, and tell me where I can find you at ten o'clock to-night. It ought to be on an elevated spot, from which a signal may be seen in every quarter of Paris."

"Would you like me to give you an order on the vicar of

nt Jacques-la-Boucherie? He will put you into one of the mbers in the tower," said the curé.

That will do admirably," replied the mendicant.

Then," said the coadjutor, "this evening, at ten o'clock; should I be satisfied with you, you shall have another bag five hundred pistoles."

he mendicant's eyes shone with desire, but he checked feeling.

This evening, sir," said he, "everything shall be ready." nd he carried his chair into the church, set his pail and inkler near the chair, went and took some holy water from large receptacle as if he had no confidence in his own, left the church.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE TOWER OF SAINT JACQUES-LA-BOUCHERIE.

T a quarter to six o'clock M. de Gondy had transacted all business and returned to the archbishop's palace.

t six o'clock the curé of Saint Merri was announced.

he coadjutor looked eagerly behind the curé, and saw that was followed by another man.

Show him in," said he.

he curé entered, and Planchet with him.

Monseigneur," said the curé of Saint Merri, "here is the son whom I had the honour to mention to you."

Planchet bowed with the air of a man who had been accus-ed to good society.

And you are disposed to serve the cause of the people?" ed Gondy.

I believe so, indeed," replied Planchet; "I am a Frondeur heart. Such as you now see me, monseigneur, I am con-nned to be hanged."

And for what?"

I rescued a nobleman from the hands of Mazarin's soldiers, o were carrying him back to the Bastille, where he had been years."

His name?"

Oh, monseigneur knows it well: it is the Comte de Roche t."

"Ah, yes, indeed!" said the coadjutor; "I have heard of that affair. I was informed that you raised the whole neighbourhood."

"Pretty nearly so," answered Planchet, with an air of self-satisfaction.

"And your business is" —

"A pastry-cook, in the Rue des Lombards."

"Explain to me how, in carrying on such a peaceful occupation, you have such warlike propensities."

"Why does monseigneur, being a churchman, now receive me in the dress of a cavalier, with a sword by his side and spurs on his boots?"

"Not badly answered, by my faith," said Gondy, laughing. "But you know that, in spite of my band, my inclinations were always warlike."

"Well, monseigneur, before I was a pastry-cook I was three years a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont; and before that, I was for eighteen months lacquey to M. d'Artagnan."

"The lieutenant of Musketeers?" demanded Gondy.

"The same, monseigneur."

"But he is said to be a violent Cardinalist."

"Hew!" said Planchet.

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing, monseigneur. M. d'Artagnan is in the service. M. d'Artagnan does his duty in defending Mazarin, who pays him, as it is the business of us citizens to attack Mazarin, who robs us."

"You are an intelligent fellow, my friend. Can I depend upon you?"

"I thought," said Planchet, "that the curé had answered for me."

"True; but I wish to receive the assurance from your own mouth."

"You may depend upon me, monseigneur, provided it concerns an insurrection in the city."

"That is exactly the case. How many men do you think you can collect in the night?"

"Two hundred muskets and five hundred halberds."

"If there were only a man in every quarter who could do the same we should have a pretty strong army."

"Yes, indeed!"

"Would you be willing to obey the Comte de Rochefort?"

"I would follow him to hell, and that is saying not a little - for I think he is capable of going down there."

"Bravo!"

"By what sign can we distinguish friends from enemies to-orrow?"

"Let every Frondeur put a bunch of straw in his hat."

"Very well; make that order."

"Do you require any money?"

"Money never does harm in anything, monseigneur. If we ave n't it, we will do without it; but if we have it, why, then ings will go on faster and better."

Gondy went to a desk and drew forth a bag.

"Here are five hundred pistoles," said he; "and if every-ing goes on well you may reckon on a like sum to-morrow."

"I will render a faithful account of this sum, monseigneur," id Planchet, putting the bag under his arm.

"Very well; I recommend the Cardinal to you."

"Be quite easy; he is in good hands."

Planchet left the room. The curé remained.

"Are you satisfied?" said he.

"Yes; this man seems to be a resolute fellow."

"Well, he will do more than he has promised."

"That is excellent."

And the curé rejoined Planchet, who was waiting for him a the staircase. Ten minutes later the curé of Saint Sulpice as announced. The moment the door was opened a man shed in; it was the Comte de Rochefort.

"It is you, then, my dear Count!" cried Gondy, holding out s hand to him.

"So you are at length decided, monseigneur," said Rochefort.

"I have always been," replied Gondy.

"Well, let us speak no more about that; you say so, and I elieve you. So we are going to make Mazarin dance, are e?"

"Well — I hope so."

"When will the dance begin?"

"The invitations are for this evening," replied the coad-tor, "but the violins will not begin to play till to-morrow orning."

"You may count on me, and on fifty soldiers whom the hevalier d'Humières has promised whenever I should want hem."

"Fifty soldiers?"

"Yes; he is recruiting, and lends them to me. When the entertainment is over, if any are lost I will replace them."

"Very well, my dear Rochefort. But that is not all."

"And what more do you want?" asked Rochefort, smiling.

"M. de Beaufort — what have you done with him?"

"He is in the Vendômois, where he is waiting until I write for him to come back to Paris."

"Write to him, then, — it is time."

"Why, you are sure of your blow?"

"Yes, but he must make haste; for the Parisians will hardly be in revolt before we shall have ten princes, instead of one, who will wish to put themselves at their head; and should he delay he will find the place taken."

"May I give him this advice as from you?"

"Certainly."

"May I tell him that he may rely upon you?"

"Most assuredly."

"And you will leave him all power?"

"As to the war, certainly; as to the politics" —

"You know that is not his forte."

"He will let me manage as I like about my cardinal's hat."

"And is your mind fixed on that?"

"As I am obliged to wear a hat the shape of which does not suit me," said Gondy, "I wish that hat, at any rate, to be red."

"There is no disputing about tastes and colours," said Rochefort, laughing; "so I will answer for his consent."

"And you will write to him this evening?"

"I will do better than that — I will send a messenger to him."

"In how many days can he be here?"

"In five days."

"Let him come, and he will find a change here."

"I hope so."

"I do not doubt you."

"Well?"

"Go and collect your fifty men, and hold yourself in readiness."

"For what?"

"For everything."

"*Is there any* rallying sign?"

"A bunch of straw in the hat."

"That's right. Adieu, monseigneur."

"Adieu, my dear Rochefort."

"Ah, Mons Mazarin, Mons Mazarin!" said Rochefort, as he dragged along his curé, who had not found an opportunity of slipping in a single word in the conversation, — "you shall see whether I am too old for action!"

It was half-past nine; and it required a good half-hour for the coadjutor to go from the archiepiscopal palace to the tower of Saint Jacques-la-Boucherie.

The coadjutor observed that there was a light burning at one of the loftiest windows of the tower.

"Good!" said he; "our syndic is at his post."

He knocked, and some one opened the door. The vicar himself was waiting for him, and lighted him up to the top of the tower. When he had reached it he showed him a little door, set the candle in an angle of the wall, that the coadjutor might find it when he came out, and went down again.

Although the key was in the door, the coadjutor knocked.

"Come in!" said a voice which the coadjutor recognised as the mendicant's.

De Gondy entered. It was in reality the distributor of holy water of the porch of Saint Eustache. He was waiting, stretched out on a sort of pallet.

On seeing the coadjutor enter, he rose up.

It struck ten o'clock.

"Well," said Gondy, "have you kept your word to me?"

"Not altogether," replied the mendicant.

"How is that?"

"You asked me for five hundred men, did you not?"

"Yes — well?"

"Well, I shall have two thousand for you."

"Are you not boasting?"

"Do you wish for proof of it?"

"Yes."

Three candles were burning, each before a window, of which one looked toward the city, the other toward the Palais Royal, and the third toward the Rue St. Denis.

The man went silently to each of these candles and extinguished them, one after the other.

The coadjutor found himself in darkness. The room was lighted only by the uncertain beams of the moon hidden

behind great black clouds, the edges of which it tinged with silver.

"What did you do?" asked the coadjutor.

"I have given the signal."

"What signal?"

"For the barricades."

"Aha!"

"When you leave this place, you will see my men at work. But take care that you do not break your legs by running into some chain, or by falling into a hole."

"Very well. Here is the sum, the same as you have already received. Now, remember that you are a leader, and do not go and drink."

"For twenty years I have drunk water only."

The man took the bag from the hands of the coadjutor, who heard the noise he made in fumbling and handling the pieces of gold.

"Aha!" said the coadjutor, "you are a miser, you rogue."

The mendicant heaved a sigh and threw the bag aside.

"Shall I always be the same, then?" said he; "and shall I never be able to put off the old man? Oh, misery! Oh, vanity!"

"And yet you take it," said the coadjutor.

"Yes; but in your presence I vow to employ what may be left of it in pious uses."

His countenance was pale and contracted, like that of a man who had just experienced a strong internal struggle.

"Singular man!" muttered Gondy.

And he took his hat to go away; but on turning round, he saw the mendicant between him and the door.

His first impression was that the man had some evil intention against him.

But soon, on the contrary, he saw him clasp his hands and fall on his knees.

"Monseigneur," said he, "before you leave me, your blessing, I beseech you!"

"Monseigneur!" exclaimed Gondy. "My friend, you take me for some other person."

"No, monseigneur, I only take you for what you are; that is to say, for the coadjutor. I knew you at the first glance."

Gondy smiled.

"And you wish for my blessing?" said he.

Yes; I need it."
ıe mendicant uttered these words in a tone of such deep
ility and profound repentance that Gondy stretched his
l over him, and gave him his blessing with all the unction
hich he was capable.
Now," said the coadjutor, "there is a bond of fellowship
een us. I have blessed you, and you are consecrated to
as I, on my part, am to you. Say, have you committed
great crime which subjects you to human justice, and
ıst which I can protect you?"
ıe mendicant shook his head.
The crime that I have committed, monseigneur, has noth-
to do with human justice; and you can free me from it
by often blessing me, as you have just done."
Be candid," said the coadjutor; "you have not all your
followed your present employment?"
No, monseigneur; I have followed it only for ten years."
And before that where were you?"
In the Bastille."
And before you were in the Bastille?"
I will tell you, monseigneur, on that day when you are
ng to receive my confession."
Very well. At whatever hour of the day or the night you
ent yourself before me, remember that I am willing to give
absolution."
Thanks, monseigneur," said the mendicant in a hollow
e; "but I am not yet ready to receive it."
Very well. Adieu."
Adieu, monseigneur," said the mendicant, opening the
and bending low before the prelate.
he coadjutor took the candle, descended the stairs, and
t out absorbed in thought.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE COMMOTION.

t was nearly eleven o'clock at night, and Gondy had not
ked a hundred paces before he perceived a strange altera-
taking place in the streets of Paris.
he whole City seemed to be inhabited by fantastic beings,

silent shadows were seen who were unpaving the street others were dragging and emptying carts; others were diggi trenches sufficient to engulf whole troops of horsemen. A these persons, so actively employed, were running back a forth like demons performing some unheard-of work. The were the beggars of the Cour des Miracles — they were t agents of the giver of holy water of the porch of St. Eustac who were preparing the barricades for the morrow.

Gondy looked at these men of darkness, these nocturn workers, with a kind of terror. He asked himself wheth after having caused all these foul and unclean creatures leave their dens, he should have the power of making the return to them again. When any one of these bein approached him he was inclined to make the sign of the cr

He reached the Rue Saint Honoré, and went down it towa the Rue de la Ferronnerie. There the appearance was qu different: merchants were running from shop to shop; t doors appeared to be shut as well as the shutters, but th were only pushed to, so that they opened and shut imme ately after giving entrance to men who seemed to be afraid to any one see what they were carrying; these men were t shopkeepers, who, having arms, were lending them to th who had none.

One individual was going from door to door, bending un the weight of swords, arquebuses, musketoons, and arms every kind, which he laid down as they were wanted. By t light of a lantern the coadjutor recognised Planchet.

The coadjutor reached the quay by the Rue de la Monna On the quay groups of citizens, in black or grey cloaks (wh denoted whether they belonged to the highest or lowest ra of their order), were standing immovable, while individu were passing from one group to another. Each of these bl or grey cloaks was raised up behind by the point of a swo and in front by the barrel of an arquebus or a musketo

On reaching the Pont-Neuf, the coadjutor found that brid guarded. A man came up to him.

"Who are you?" demanded this man. "I do not kn you as one of us."

"That is because you do not know your friends, my d Louvières," said the coadjutor, raising his hat.

Louvières recognised him and bowed.

Gondy pursued his round, and went down even to the tow

Nesle. There he saw a long line of men gliding along the alls; they might have been taken for a procession of phanms, for they were all enveloped in white cloaks. Having ached a certain spot, all these men appeared to vanish, one ter the other, as if the earth had opened under their feet. ondy took up his position in an angle, and saw them all dispear, from the first even to the last but one.

The last man raised his eyes, doubtless to make himself sure at he and his companions were not watched, and, in spite of e darkness, he saw Gondy. He went straight up to him and it a pistol to his throat.

"Holà! Monsieur de Rochefort," said Gondy, laughing; et us not play with firearms."

Rochefort recognised the voice.

"Ah, is it you, monseigneur?" said he.

"My own self. But what people are you thus conducting to the bowels of the earth?"

"My fifty recruits from the Chevalier d'Humières, who are stined to enter into the light cavalry, and who have received, part of their equipment, their white cloaks."

"And where are you going?"

"To a sculptor's, a friend of mine; only we descend by the up-door through which he carries in his marble."

"Very well," said Gondy, and he shook hands with Rochet, who then went down in his turn and closed the trapor behind him.

The coadjutor returned home. It was one o'clock in the orning; he opened his window and leaned out to listen. A strange, unheard-of, unknown sound pervaded the whole ty. It was evident that some unusual and terrible thing was king place in all these streets, which were as dark as Erebus. om time to time a low rumbling noise was heard, like that a gathering storm or a rising surge; but nothing clear, nothg distinct, nothing explicable, was offered to the mind; one ght have said that these sounds were like the mysterious d subterranean noises that precede an earthquake.

Thus the work of revolt continued throughout the whole ght. The next morning, Paris, on awakening, seemed to rt at her own appearance. She might have been taken for esieged city. Armed men were standing by the barricades, th threatening eye and musket on the shoulder. Watchords, patrols, arrests, nay, even executions — these were what

those who passed met with at every step. Plumed hats and gilded swords were stopped, to make the wearers cry, "Down with Mazarin! Vive Broussel!" and whoever refused to submit to this ceremony was hooted, spit upon, and even beaten. They did not yet kill, but it was apparent that the inclination was not wanting.

The barricades had been pushed forward, even to the Palais Royal. From the Rue des Bons-Enfants to that of La Ferronnerie, from the Rue Saint Thomas du Louvre to the Pont-Neuf, from the Rue Richelieu to the gate of Saint Honoré, there were more than ten thousand armed men, the foremost of whom were uttering cries of defiance to the unmoved sentinels of the regiment of Guards, placed as an advanced post all around the Palais Royal, the iron-grated gates of which were closed behind them — a precaution that made their situation precarious. In the midst of all this, bands of men, from a hundred to three hundred in number, ghastly, livid, and ragged, were going about carrying standards on which was written: *"Behold the poverty of the people!"* Wherever these standard-bearers passed frenzied cries were heard; and there were so many similar bands that the cries were universal.

Great was the astonishment of Anne of Austria and Mazarin when, on their awaking, it was declared that the City, which they had left in tranquillity the evening before, was now fevered and in commotion. Neither of them was willing to believe the reports that reached them, and they declared that they would trust only to their own eyes and ears. So a window was opened; they saw, they heard, and they were convinced.

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders and pretended greatly to despise this populace; yet he turned pale, and ran to his cabinet in extreme agitation, shutting up his gold and jewels in his caskets, and putting his most valuable diamonds on his fingers. The Queen, furious, and abandoning herself entirely to her arbitrary self-will, sent for the Marshal de la Meilleraie, and ordered him to take as many men as he chose and to ascertain the meaning of this *plaisanterie*.

The Marshal was generally venturesome and fearless, having that haughty contempt for the populace which all the gentlemen of the sword professed toward it. He took a hundred and fifty men, and attempted to go out by the Pont du Louvre; but there he encountered Rochefort and his fifty light horsemen, *accompanied* by more than fifteen hundred persons. There

as no possibility of forcing such a barrier. The Marshal did ot attempt it, but went up the quay.

At the Pont-Neuf, however, he found Louvières and his tizens. This time the Marshal tried to charge; but he was ceived with musket-shots, while stones fell like hail from all ıe windows. He there left three of his men.

He retreated toward the market-place, but there he encoun-red Planchet and his halberdiers, and the halberds were wered against him in a threatening attitude. He attempted ride over those grey cloaks; but the grey cloaks held their round, and the Marshal fell back toward the Rue St. Honoré, aving on the field of battle four more of his Guards, who had en expeditiously put to the sword.

Then he passed down the Rue Saint Honoré; but there he ıne upon the barricades of the mendicant of Saint Eustache. hey were guarded, not only by armed men, but also by women ıd children. Master Friquet, the possessor of a pistol and vord that Louvières had given him, had organized a band of ung rascals like himself, and was making noise enough to stroy everything.

The Marshal, deeming this position the worst guarded of all, solved to attack it. He caused twenty of his men to dis-ount to force open the barricades, while he himself and the st of his troop covered the assailants on horseback. The enty men marched straight against the obstacle; but there, m behind beams, between cart wheels, and from every evated situation, a terrible firing broke out; and at the noise this firing Planchet's halberdiers made their appearance at e corner of the cemetery of the Innocents, and the citizens of uvières at the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie.

The Maréchal de la Meilleraie was caught between two fires. The Maréchal de la Meilleraie was brave; so he determined die where he was. He returned shot for shot, and shrieks of in began to be heard in the crowd. The Guards, in better actice, shot more accurately; but the citizens, being more merous, overwhelmed them with a perfect tempest of fire. en fell around him as they might have fallen at Rocroy or rida. Fontrailles, his aide-de-camp, had his arm shattered; s horse received a ball in the neck, and he had great diffi-lty in managing it, for the pain made it nearly frantic. In ıe, they had reached that extreme point when the bravest els a shudder in his veins and the cold moisture on his brow,

when suddenly the crowd opened in the direction of the Rue de l'Arbre-sec, crying out, "*Vive le coadjuteur!*" and Gondy, in rochet and purple hood, made his appearance, quietly passing along through the midst of the firing, and distributing his benedictions from right to left with as much calmness as if he were leading the procession of Corpus Christi.

All fell on their knees.

The Marshal recognised him and hastened up to him.

"Help me out of this, for Heaven's sake!" said he, "or I shall leave my skin here, and all my men's."

There was such a tumult that the rolling of Heaven's own thunder could not have been heard. Gondy held up his hand and demanded silence. They were silent.

"My children," said he, "here is Monsieur le Maréchal de la Meilleraie, whose intentions you have misunderstood, and who undertakes, on entering the Louvre, to ask the Queen, in your name, to liberate our Broussel. Do you agree to this, Marshal?" added Gondy, turning towards La Meilleraie.

"*Morbleu!*" cried he, "indeed, I believe I'll agree to it. I did not expect to get off so cheaply."

"He gives you his word as a gentleman," said Gondy.

The Marshal raised his hand in token of assent.

"*Vive le coadjuteur!*" shouted the crowd. Some voices even added, "*Vive le Maréchal!*" but all took up the chorus. "*À bas le Mazarin!*" — Down with Mazarin!

The crowd yielded; the way by the Rue Saint Honoré was the shortest. The barricades were opened, and the Marshal, with the remains of his troop, made their retreat, preceded by Friquet and his banditti, some pretending to beat the drum, others imitating the sound of trumpets.

It was almost a triumphal march; only the barricades were again closed behind the Guards. The Marshal gnawed his knuckles.

All this time, as we have said, Mazarin was in his cabinet, putting his own trifling affairs into order. He had sent for D'Artagnan, but, in the midst of all this tumult, he despaired of finding him, as D'Artagnan was not on duty. In ten minutes, however, he appeared at the door, followed by his inseparable Porthos.

"Ah! come, come, Monsou d'Artagnan," exclaimed the Cardinal, "and welcome, as well as your friend. But what *is going on* in this cursed Paris?"

"What is going on, monsignor? Nothing good," replied D'Artagnan, shaking his head. "The City is in open revolt; and just now, as I was crossing the Rue Montorgueil with M. du Vallon, — whom you see here, and who is your devoted servant, — in spite of my uniform, and perhaps even on account of my uniform, they tried to force us to cry out, '*Vive Broussel!*' And may I tell you, monsignor, what else they also tried to make us shout?"

"Tell it — tell it."

"'Down with Mazarin!' Faith, that was the very word."

Mazarin smiled, but turned very pale.

"And you shouted?" said he.

"Faith! no," said D'Artagnan; "I was not in voice; and as M. du Vallon has a cold, he did not shout either. Then, monsignor"—

"Then what?" said Mazarin.

"Look at my hat and cloak."

And D'Artagnan pointed out four bullet-holes in his cloak and two in his hat. A blow from a halberd had cut down Porthos's dress one side, and a pistol-shot had broken his plume.

"*Diavolo!*" said the Cardinal thoughtfully; and looking at the two friends with an air of simple admiration: "I am sure I should have shouted."

At this moment the noise of the tumult sounded nearer. Mazarin wiped his brow and looked around him. He would have liked to go to the window, but dared not.

"See what is going on, M. d'Artagnan," said he.

D'Artagnan went to the window with his habitual unconcern.

"Oho!" said he, "what is this? The Maréchal de la Meilleraie returning without his hat; Fontrailles carrying his arm in a sling; Guards wounded, horses covered with blood. Eh! but what are the sentinels doing? They are aiming — they are going to fire!"

"Orders have been given," said Mazarin, "to fire on the people should they come near the Palais Royal."

"But if they fire, all is lost!" said D'Artagnan.

"We have the iron-barred gates."

"The gates! In five minutes those iron gates will be torn up, twisted, battered down — Do not fire, for God's sake!" cried D'Artagnan, *opening* the window.

In spite of this exhortation, which, in the midst of the tumult, could not have been heard, three or four musket-shots were fired; then a terrible volley succeeded; the balls were heard rattling against the front of the Palais Royal; and one of them, passing under D'Artagnan's arm, broke a mirror in which Porthos was looking at himself with great admiration.

"Oh, dear me!" cried the Cardinal — "a Venetian mirror!"

"Oh! monsignor," said D'Artagnan calmly, closing the window, "do not weep yet — it is not worth while; for it is probable that in an hour hence there will not remain one of all these mirrors in the palace, whether they are Venetian or Parisian."

"What is your advice, then?" asked the Cardinal, trembling all over.

"Eh, morbleu! to give Broussel up to them, since they want him! What the devil can you do with a parliamentary councillor? He is of no use."

"And, M. du Vallon, is that your opinion? What would you do?"

"I should give up Broussel," answered Porthos.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said Mazarin, "I will talk to the Queen about it."

At the end of the corridor he stopped.

"I can depend upon you — can I not, gentlemen?" said he.

"We do not give ourselves twice," said D'Artagnan; "we are pledged to you; command and we will obey."

"Very well, then," said Mazarin, "enter that closet and wait."

And making a circuit, he passed into the salon by another door.

CHAPTER L.

THE COMMOTION BECOMES AN INSURRECTION.

The closet into which D'Artagnan and Porthos were ushered was separated only by tapestry portières from the salon in which the Queen was. The slightness of the partition, therefore, enabled them to hear all that passed, while the opening between the two curtains, though narrow, allowed them also to see.

The Queen, pale with anger, was standing in this salon; and yet her self-command was so great that it might have been supposed she was altogether unmoved. Behind her were Comminges, Villequier, and Guitaut; behind the men were the ladies.

Before her, the Chancellor Séguier (the same personage who, twenty years before, had so persecuted her) was relating how his carriage had just been broken to pieces, how he himself had been pursued, how he had thrown himself into the Hôtel d'O——, and how the hôtel had been immediately carried by storm, pillaged, and devastated; fortunately he had time to gain a closet concealed in the tapestry, in which an old woman had shut him up, with his brother, the Bishop of Meaux. There the danger had been so imminent, the rioters having approached this closet with such violent threats, that the Chancellor had thought his last hour was come, and, to be prepared for the death that would inevitably follow his discovery, had confessed to his brother. Fortunately, his fears were not realized: the people, supposing he had escaped by some back door, had retired, and enabled him to escape in safety. Then, disguising himself in some of the Marquis d'O——'s clothes, he left the hôtel, stepping over the body of his own exempt, who, along with two Guards, had been killed in defending the street door.

During this recital Mazarin had entered and quietly glided up to the Queen, and was listening.

"Well," demanded the Queen, when the Chancellor had finished, "and what do you think of all this?"

"I think that it is a very serious affair, madame."

"But what advice do you offer me?"

"I could offer your Majesty one piece of advice, but I dare not."

"Oh, dare! dare, sir!" said the Queen, with a bitter smile; "you were daring enough in another affair."

The Chancellor coloured and stammered out some words.

"It is not with the past that we have now to do, but with the present," said the Queen. "You said that you could give me some advice: what is it?"

"Madame," said the Chancellor, with great hesitation, "it is to release Broussel."

The Queen, although very pale, visibly grew more so, and her face contracted.

"Release Broussel!" said she; "never!"

At this moment steps were heard in the antechamber, and, without being announced, the Maréchal de la Meilleraie appeared at the door.

"Ah, here you are, Marshal!" joyfully exclaimed Anne of Austria; "you have brought all this rabble to their senses, I hope?"

"Madame," said the Marshal, "I have left three of my men on the Pont-Neuf, four in the market-place, six at the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, and two at the gate of your palace, — in all, fifteen, — and I bring back ten or a dozen wounded men. My hat is gone, I know not where — it was carried off by a bullet; and in all probability I should have shared the same fate as my hat had it not been for the coadjutor, who came and rescued me."

"Ah!" said the Queen, "I should have been indeed astonished not to find that little bandy-legged terrier dog mixed up with all this."

"Madame," said La Meilleraie, laughing, "do not speak too ill of him before me, for the service he has rendered me is as yet too recent."

"That is all very well," continued the Queen; "be as grateful as you please; that is no concern of mine. Here you are, safe and sound, and that is all I require. Be not only welcome, then, but *well come back*."

"Yes, madame, but I am well come back only upon one condition; which is, that I should convey to you the will of the people."

"The will of the people!" said Anne of Austria, frowning. "Oho, Monsieur le Maréchal, you must have found yourself in great danger indeed to undertake this strange embassy!"

These words were pronounced in a tone so ironical as not to escape the Marshal's observation.

"Pardon me, madame," said he; "I am no advocate. I am a soldier, and therefore I am probably ignorant of the true meaning of words. I should have said the *desire*, and not the *will*, of the people. As for the remark you did me the honour to make, I believe that you meant that I was afraid."

The Queen smiled.

"Very well. Yes, madame, I was afraid. It is the third time in my life that this has occurred to me; and yet I have *been in twelve* general actions, and I know not how many

combats and skirmishes. Yes, I was afraid; and I prefer even facing your Majesty, however menacing may be your smile, to being opposed to those demons of hell who accompanied me here, and who come from I know not where!"

"Bravo!" said D'Artagnan to Porthos, in a low voice; "well answered."

"Very well!" said the Queen, biting her lips, while the courtiers looked at each other with astonishment; "what is this desire of my people?"

"That Broussel be given up to them, madame," replied the Marshal.

"Never!" exclaimed the Queen — "never!"

"Your Majesty is the mistress," said La Meilleraie, bowing and taking one step back.

"Where are you going, Marshal?" demanded the Queen.

"To deliver your Majesty's reply to those who are waiting for it."

"Remain here, Marshal. I do not wish to appear to be treating with rebels."

"Madame, I have pledged my word," said the Marshal.

"Which means" —

"That unless you order me to be arrested, I am compelled to return to them."

The eyes of Anne of Austria flashed like lightning.

"Oh, sir," said she, "do not calculate on that! I have arrested greater men than yourself. Guitaut!"

Mazarin rushed forward.

"Madame," said he, "if, in my turn, I dared to offer you some advice" —

"Would it also be to release Broussel, sir? In that case, you may spare yourself the trouble."

"No," said Mazarin; "although perhaps that is as good as any other."

"What may it be, then?"

"To send for the coadjutor."

"The coadjutor!" exclaimed the Queen; "that hideous marplot? He is the one who has excited all this disturbance."

"The more cogent reason why you should send for him," replied Mazarin. "If he has excited it, he can calm it."

"And observe, madame," said Comminges, who was standing near a window and looking out, — "observe, it is a good

opportunity; for there he is giving his blessing on the Place of the Palais Royal."

The Queen darted to the window.

"It is true," she cried. "The consummate hypocrite! Look at him!"

"I can perceive," said Mazarin, "that every one is kneeling before him, although he is only the coadjutor; while if I were in his place they would tear me to pieces, although I am a cardinal. Therefore, madame, I persist in my *desire* [Mazarin dwelt upon this word] that your Majesty would receive the coadjutor."

"Why do not you also say *your will?*" demanded the Queen, in a low voice.

Mazarin bowed.

The Queen seemed for an instant absorbed in thought. Then raising her head:

"Monsieur le Maréchal," said she, "go for the coadjutor and bring him to me."

"And what shall I say to the people?" demanded the Marshal.

"That they must have patience," replied the Queen. "I am sure that I have enough."

There was such an imperative accent in the voice of the haughty Spanish woman that the Marshal made no further observation, but bowed and left the room.

D'Artagnan turned to Porthos.

"How will this end?" said he.

"We shall soon see," answered Porthos, in his tranquil manner.

In the meantime Anne of Austria went to Comminges and spoke to him in a low voice.

Mazarin, uneasy, looked toward D'Artagnan and Porthos.

The rest were talking in low tones.

The door opened again, and the Marshal appeared, followed by the coadjutor.

"Here, madame, is M. de Gondy," said he, "who hastens to obey your Majesty's orders."

The Queen advanced a few steps toward him and stopped short, cold, severe, and motionless, with her under lip disdainfully thrust forward.

Gondy bowed respectfully.

"Well, sir," said the Queen, "what do you say to this *commotion*?"

"That it is no longer a commotion, madame, but a revolt."

"The revolt rests at the door of those who think that my people have the power to revolt," exclaimed the Queen, incapable of dissimulating before the coadjutor, whom she considered, and justly perhaps, as the promoter of all this disturbance. "A revolt! See what those call it who favour the commotion that they have themselves excited. But wait now, wait: the King's authority will soon settle all this."

"And is it to tell me this, madame," coldly replied Gondy, "that your Majesty has done me the honour of admitting me to your presence?"

"No, my dear coadjutor," said Mazarin; "it is to ask your advice under the distressing circumstances in which we are placed."

"And is it true," asked Gondy, feigning great astonishment, "that her Majesty has sent for me to give her advice?"

"Yes," said the Queen; "they wished me to do so."

The coadjutor bowed.

"Her Majesty then desires" —

"That you would inform her how you would act in her situation," hastily answered Mazarin.

The coadjutor looked at the Queen, who gave an affirmative nod.

"In her Majesty's place," coolly replied Gondy, "I should not hesitate — I should give up Broussel."

"And if I do not give him up," exclaimed the Queen, "what do you think will happen?"

"I think that to-morrow not one stone will be left upon another in all Paris," said the Marshal.

"I am not asking you," said the Queen dryly, and without even turning her head; "I addressed M. de Gondy."

"If her Majesty asks me," said the coadjutor, with the same tranquillity, "I tell her that my opinion exactly agrees with the Marshal's."

The colour mounted into the Queen's face; her beautiful eyes looked as if they were going to start out of her head; her vermilion lips, compared by all the poets of the time to the blossom of the pomegranate, turned pale and trembled with rage; she almost frightened even Mazarin himself, accustomed as he was to the domestic storms of this turbulent household.

"Give up Broussel!" she at length exclaimed, with a

frightful smile; "excellent advice, by my faith! It is evident enough that it comes from a priest!"

Gondy remained firm. The insults of the day seemed to roll from him like the sarcasms of the evening before. But hatred and revenge were silently gathering, drop by drop, at the bottom of his heart. He looked coldly at the Queen, who was urging Mazarin to say something in his turn.

Mazarin, as usual, thought a good deal, and spoke but little.

"He! he!" said he, "it is good and friendly advice. I also would give up this worthy Monsou Broussel, dead or alive, and all would then be over."

"If you gave him up dead, all would be over, as you say, monseigneur, but in a different way from what you expect."

"Did I say dead or alive?" replied Mazarin; "a mere figure of speech. You know that I speak French badly, while you speak and write it so well, Monsou le Coadjuteur."

"This is a fine cabinet council," said D'Artagnan to Porthos; "but we held much better ones at La Rochelle, with Athos and Aramis."

"At the bastion of St. Gervais," said Porthos.

"There and elsewhere."

The coadjutor suffered the shower to pass on, and replied, with the same imperturbability:

"Madame, if your Majesty does not enjoy my advice, it is doubtless because you have better to follow. I am too well aware of the Queen's wisdom, and of that of her counsellors, to suppose that the capital will be long left in such a state of tumult as may produce a revolution."

"Therefore it is your opinion," said the Queen, with a sneer and biting her lips with rage, "that the commotion of yesterday, which is to-day a revolt, may to-morrow become a revolution?"

"Yes, madame," gravely replied the coadjutor.

"Why, to hear you, sir, the people must have got beyond all restraint!"

"This is a bad year for kings," said Gondy, shaking his head; "look at England, madame."

"Yes; but fortunately we have no Oliver Cromwell in France," said the Queen.

"Who knows?" replied Gondy. "Such men are like the *thunder-bolt* — they are only seen when they strike."

very one shuddered, and there was a momentary silence, ing which the Queen pressed her hands against her bosom, lently to repress the violent beatings of her heart.

Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "look at that priest."

I see him," said Porthos; "what about it?"

Well, he is a man!"

'orthos looked at his friend with astonishment; it was evi- t that he did not clearly understand what he meant.

Your Majesty," continued the merciless coadjutor, "is refore about to pursue the measures that seem to you most edient; but I can foresee that they are terrible, and of a ure to increase the irritation of the rebels."

Well then, Monsieur le Coadjuteur, you who have such t influence over them, and who are our friend," said the en ironically, "you will calm them by giving them your edictions."

Perhaps it will be too late," said Gondy, still like ice; rhaps I shall have lost all my influence over them; while giving up Broussel, your Majesty will sever the roots of sedition, and will acquire the right of severely chastising fresh access of revolt."

Have I not then this right?" exclaimed the Queen.

If you have, use it," replied Gondy.

Peste!" said D'Artagnan to Porthos; "there is a char- r I like. Why is he not minister, and why am I not his rtagnan, instead of belonging to that scoundrel Mazarin? mordieu! the fine strokes we would make together!"

Yes," said Porthos.

he Queen, by a sign, dismissed the Court, except Mazarin. dy bowed and was retiring with the others.

Remain, sir," said the Queen.

Good," thought Gondy to himself; "she is going to d."

She is going to kill him," said D'Artagnan to Porthos; it at all events not by my aid. On the contrary, I swear od that if any one attacks him I will fall on the assail- s."

And so will I," said Porthos.

Good," muttered Mazarin, seating himself; "now we shall something fresh."

he Queen looked after those who were leaving the room; n the last had shut the door she turned round. It was

evident that she was making incredible efforts to subdue her anger: she fanned herself, inhaled her perfumery, and walked up and down. Mazarin remained seated, apparently reflecting. Gondy, who was beginning to be somewhat uneasy, examined all the tapestry with his looks, felt of the cuirass that he wore under his long robe, and, from time to time, felt under his purple hood or scarf to be certain that the handle of a Spanish dagger which he had concealed there was ready for his grasp.

"Now let us see," said the Queen, at length stopping short, — "let us see, now that we are alone; repeat your advice, Monsieur le Coadjuteur."

"It is this, madame: pretend that you have reflected, confess publicly that you have made a mistake, — for this is the power of strong governments, — release Broussel from prison, and restore him to the people."

"Oh!" exclaimed Anne of Austria, "thus to humble myself! Am I, or am I not, Queen? All this howling rabble, is it, or is it not, the mass of my subjects? Have I any friends — any Guards? Ah, by our Lady, as said Queen Catherine," she continued, warming at her own words, "rather than give them up this infamous Broussel I would strangle him with mine own hands!"

And she stretched her clenched hands at Gondy, whom she at that moment detested quite as much as Broussel.

Gondy remained perfectly unmoved; not a muscle of his countenance changed; but his icy look crossed the Queen's furious glance like a cimeter.

"There would be a dead man, if there were still a Vitry at Court and he should enter at this moment," said the Gascon. "But before he reached the good prelate I should kill Vitry on the spot; the Cardinal would be infinitely obliged to me for it."

"Hush!" said Porthos; "just listen."

"Madame!" cried the Cardinal, seizing hold of Anne of Austria and drawing her back, — "madame, what are you doing?" Then he added in Spanish: "Anne, are you mad? You are here wrangling like a citizen's wife — you, a queen! Do you not see that you have before you, in the person of this priest, all the people of Paris, whom it is dangerous to insult at this moment; and that, if this priest wills it, in one hour you will no longer have a crown? Come, then; by and by, on another *occasion, you* may be firm and resolute, but this is not the time.

· you must flatter and caress, or you are only a woman of
ar mind."
t the first words of this speech D'Artagnan had seized
hos's arm, and had continued gradually squeezing it.
a, when Mazarin had finished: "Porthos," said he in a
low voice, "never let Mazarin know that I understand
ıish, or I am a lost man, and you also."
Good!" answered Porthos.
his rough admonition — delivered with a species of elo-
ıce characteristic of Mazarin when he used Spanish or Ital-
but which he entirely lost when using French — was
:en with an unmoved countenance, which did not permit
dy, skilful physiognomist as he was, to suspect that it was
hing but a simple recommendation to be more moderate.
n her part, also, the Queen, thus rudely admonished, sud-
y calmed herself. She, as it were, let the fire drop from
eyes, the blood from her cheeks, and the wordy anger from
lips. She sat down, letting her arms fall powerless by her
s, and in a voice stifled by her tears:
Pardon me, Monsieur le Coadjuteur," she said, "and attrib-
this violence to what I suffer. A woman, and therefore
ect to the weakness of my sex, I am frightened at the
idea of a civil war; a queen, and accustomed to obedi-
, I am aroused by the first appearance of opposition."
Madame," said Gondy, bowing, "your Majesty deceives
·self when you term my sincere advice opposition to your
Your Majesty has none but the most submissive and
ectful subjects. The people do not blame the Queen:
ask for Broussel — that is all; and will be only too happy
.ve under your Majesty's laws; provided, however, that
· Majesty gives them up Broussel!" added Gondy, smiling.
azarin, who had pricked up his ears at the words, "*the
le do not blame the Queen*," and imagined that the
jutor was going to speak of the cries of "Down with
arin!" was grateful to Gondy for this suppression, and now
, in his silkiest voice and with his most gracious smile:
Madame, trust the coadjutor, who is one of our most skil-
ɔoliticians. The first cardinal's hat that may be vacant
ıs fitted for his noble head."
Ah! what need you have of me, you cunning rascal!"
ght Gondy.
And what will he *promise* us," said D'Artagnan, "on the

day they shall want to kill him. Peste! if he gives away hats in this manner, let us prepare ourselves, Porthos, and each of us ask for a regiment to-morrow. Corbleu! if the civil war lasts but a year, I will have the Constable's sword regilded for myself."

"And for me?" asked Porthos.

"You? I will give you the *bâton* of the Maréchal de la Meilleraie, who appears to me not to be in great favour at this present moment."

"So, sir," said the Queen, "you fear this popular excitement?"

"Seriously, madame!" replied Gondy, astonished at finding himself no further advanced, "I fear lest it should cause great ravages when the torrent has broken its banks."

"And I," said the Queen — "I think that in this case it is necessary to interpose fresh embankments. Go! I will consider of it."

Gondy looked at Mazarin in astonishment. Mazarin approached the Queen to speak to her. At this moment a frightful tumult was heard in the Place du Palais Royal.

Gondy smiled; the Queen's countenance became inflamed; Mazarin turned pale.

"What is the matter now?" said he.

Comminges rushed into the room.

"Pardon me, madame," said Comminges to the Queen as he entered; "the people have dashed the sentinels to pieces against the iron rails, and are at this moment forcing the gates. What orders do you give?"

"Listen, madame!" said Gondy.

The roaring of the waves, the crash of thunder, the bellowings of a volcano, cannot be compared to the storm of shouts that ascended to the heavens at that moment.

"What do I command?" said the Queen.

"Yes, madame; there is no time to lose."

"How many men have you in the Palais Royal?"

"Six hundred."

"Place one hundred round the King, and with the remainder sweep me away this populace."

"Madame," said Mazarin, "what are you doing there?"

"Go!" said the Queen.

Comminges left the room with the passive obedience of the soldier.

At this moment a horrible crash was heard; one of the gates began to give way.

"Ah, madame!" said Mazarin, "you have destroyed us all! — the King, and yourself, and me!"

Anne of Austria, at this exclamation, which came from the heart of the terrified Cardinal, began to be frightened herself. She recalled Comminges.

"It is too late!" said Mazarin, tearing his hair, — "it is too late!"

The gate gave way, and they heard the triumphant howlings of the populace. D'Artagnan put his hand to his sword, and made a sign to Porthos to do the same.

"Save the Queen!" cried Mazarin, addressing the coadjutor.

Gondy rushed to the window and opened it. He recognised Louvières at the head of from three to four thousand men.

"Not one step farther!" he cried; "the Queen is signing."

"What are you saying?" exclaimed the Queen.

"The truth, madame," said Mazarin, putting paper and pen before her; "it is necessary." Then he added: "Sign, Anne, I beseech you! I will have it so!"

The Queen fell into a chair, took the pen, and signed.

Restrained by Louvières, the people had not advanced one step farther; but that terrible murmur, indicative of popular rage, still continued.

The Queen wrote: "The jailer of the prison of Saint Germain will liberate the councillor Broussel." And she signed it.

The coadjutor, who devoured her slightest motion with his eyes, seized the paper as soon as it was signed, returned to the window, and waving it with his hand:

"Here is the order!" said he.

All Paris seemed to utter one vast shout of joy; then the cries, "*Vive Broussel!*" "*Vive le coadjuteur!*" resounded.

"*Vive la Reine!*" said the coadjutor.

Some voices responded to his, but faint and rare.

Perhaps the coadjutor himself uttered this cry only to make the Queen more fully sensible of her weakness.

"And now that you have got what you wanted," said she, "go, Monsieur Gondy!"

"When the Queen again requires me," said the coadjutor, bowing, "her Majesty knows that I am at her command."

The Queen bowed and Gondy retired.

"Ah! accursed priest!" exclaimed Anne of Austria, stretch-

ing out her hand toward the scarcely closed door, "I will or day make you drink the dregs of that gall you have poure out for me to-day."

Mazarin wished to approach her.

"Leave me!" cried she; "you are not a man!"

And she left the room.

"You are not a woman," muttered Mazarin.

Then, after a moment's reflection, he remembered th D'Artagnan and Porthos were in the closet, and must, cons quently, have heard and seen everything. He frowned, a went straight to the tapestry, which he lifted. The closet w empty.

At the Queen's last word D'Artagnan had seized Porthos b the hand and dragged him into the gallery.

Thither Mazarin now followed them, and found the tw friends walking up and down.

"Why did you leave the closet, M. d'Artagnan?" sa Mazarin.

"Because," answered D'Artagnan, "the Queen command every one to leave the room; and I thought the comma applied to us as well as to the others."

"So you have been here"—

"About a quarter of an hour," said D'Artagnan, looking Porthos and making him a sign not to contradict him.

Mazarin perceived the sign, and was convinced that D'A tagnan had seen and heard everything; yet he was obliged him for the falsehood.

"M. d'Artagnan," said he, "you are exactly the man wanted, and you may rely upon me, and your friend as well

Then, bowing to the two friends with his most charmi smile, he returned to his cabinet much more tranquil; for the appearance of Gondy the tumult had ceased as if b enchantment.

CHAPTER LI.

MISFORTUNE A HELP TO MEMORY.

ANNE had returned to her oratory actually furious.

"What!" she exclaimed, wringing her beautiful hands,- "what! The people saw M. de Condé, the first Prince of th *blood,* arrested by my mother-in-law, Marie de' Medicis; the

ıw my mother-in-law herself, the former Regent, driven away
y the Cardinal; they saw M. de Vendôme, that is to say, the
ın of Henry IV., a prisoner at Vincennes — and they said
ɔthing while these great persons were insulted, imprisoned,
ıd threatened! Yet for a Broussel! — oh, my God! what,
ıen, has become of royalty?"

Anne, without knowing it, touched the heart of the trouble. he people had said nothing for the princes, but they rose for roussel because the question concerned a plebeian, and by efending Broussel they instinctively felt that they were efending themselves.

In the meantime Mazarin was walking up and down his ıbinet, looking from time to time at his beautiful Venetian ırror, all starred and shattered.

"Ah!" he was saying, "it is very melancholy, I know it ell enough, to be forced to yield in this manner. But, bah! e shall have our revenge. Of what consequence is Broussel? t is a name and not a principle."

Skilful politician as he was, Mazarin was this time mistaken. roussel was a principle and not a name.

So when Broussel reëntered Paris on the following day, in large coach, with his son Louvières by his side and Friquet ehind the carriage, all the people rushed armed to meet him. he cries of "Vive Broussel!" "Long live our father!" re- ɔunded from every quarter, and brought death to Mazarin's ırs. The Cardinal's spies, and the Queen's, brought vexatious ıtelligence from all quarters, and found the Cardinal much gitated and the Queen very calm. The Queen appeared to be ıaturing some great resolution, and this redoubled Mazarin's nxiety. He well knew the haughty Princess, and much readed the resolves of Anne of Austria.

The coadjutor had entered the Parliament more truly King ıan the King, the Queen, and Mazarin united. By his advice n edict was passed, inviting the people to lay aside their arms nd to demolish the barricades. It was now known that it ·ould need only one hour to resume their arms, and only one ight to restore the barricades.

Planchet had returned to his shop. The victory brings am- esty. Planchet had therefore no longer any fears of hanging; nd, moreover, he was convinced that if they only threatened arrest him the people would rise in his favour, as they had ast done for Broussel.

Rochefort had restored his light horsemen to the Chevalier d'Humières; two of the number did not answer to the muster-call; but the chevalier, who was at heart a Frondeur, would not hear to any indemnity.

The mendicant had resumed his place in the porch of Saint Eustache, distributing, as usual, his holy water with one hand and asking alms with the other; and no one suspected that those two hands had just been aiding in pulling from the social edifice the foundation stone of royalty.

Louvières was proud and contented. He had avenged himself on Mazarin, whom he detested, and had greatly contributed to the liberation of his father. His name had been mentioned with terror at the Palais Royal; and he laughingly said to the councillor, now restored to his family:

"Do you believe, father, that if I were now to ask the Queen for a company she would give it me?"

D'Artagnan had taken advantage of the tranquillity to despatch Raoul, whom he had had great difficulty in keeping quiet during the disturbance, and who absolutely insisted on drawing his sword for one party or the other. Raoul had at first resisted; but when D'Artagnan spoke in the Count's name, Raoul paid Madame de Chevreuse a visit, and then departed for the army.

Rochefort alone considered the affair badly finished. He had written to the Duc de Beaufort, who was momentarily expected, and would find Paris in a state of tranquillity. So he went to the coadjutor, to ask him whether it would not now be better to send to the Prince, to advise him not to come; but Gondy said, after reflecting an instant:

"Let him continue his journey."

"Why, is n't it all over?" asked Rochefort.

"Why, my dear Count, we are as yet only at the beginning."

"What makes you think so?"

"The knowledge I have of the Queen's heart; she will not remain beaten."

"Is she preparing anything?"

"I hope so."

"What do you know? Tell me."

"I know that she has written to the Prince, requesting him to return from the army as speedily as possible."

"Ah!" said Rochefort, "you are right; we must let M. de Beaufort come up."

very evening of this conversation the news spread that
ince had arrived.
was very simple and natural, and yet it caused an im-
sensation. It was said that indiscretions had been com-
by Madame de Longueville, to whom the Prince, her
:, had made confidential communications, for he was
l of loving her more ardently than a brother should.
se confidences related to sinister projects on the part of
ieen.
evening of the Prince's arrival, the most influential
s, the sheriffs and the ward captains, visited their ac-
ances, saying:
hy should we not take the King and place him in the
de Ville? We are wrong to allow him to be educated
enemies, who give him bad counsel; while if he were
d by the coadjutor, for example, he would imbibe
il principles, and would love his people."
:e was a secret agitation during the night, and on the
lay the grey and black cloaks, the patrols of armed
epers, and the bands of mendicants reappeared.
Queen had passed the night in a strictly private confer-
ith the Prince, who had been introduced into her oratory
night, and did not leave it till five o'clock.
hat hour the Queen went to the Cardinal's cabinet. If
ı her part, had not gone to bed, the Cardinal, on his, was
/ up.
was writing an answer to Cromwell; six days had al-
slipped away of the ten which he had requested Mordaunt
:.
h!" he was saying; "I shall have made him wait a
but Cromwell knows too much about revolutions not to
me."
was therefore reading with satisfaction the first para-
of his reply, when he was interrupted by a gentle
ng at the door which communicated with the Queen's
ients. Anne of Austria was the only person who could
oy that door; the Cardinal arose and opened it.
Queen was in négligé, but the costume was not unbe-
;; for, like Diane de Poitiers and Ninon de l'Enclos, Anne
stria preserved the privilege of being always beautiful.
iorning, however, she was more beautiful than usual, for
es had all that brilliancy that follows from inward joy.

"What is the matter, madame?" said Mazarin, some anxiously; "you have a very proud look."

"Yes, Giulio," said she, "proud and happy; for I found a method of stifling this hydra."

"You are a great politician, my Queen," said Mazarin; us hear this method."

And he concealed what he had written, by slipping the l under some blank paper.

"They wish to take the King from me; did you know said the Queen.

"Alas, yes! and to hang me."

"They shall not have the King."

"And they shall not hang me, *benone!*"

"Listen. I want to carry away from them my son, and self, and you with us. I wish that this event, which to-d to-morrow will change the aspect of affairs, should be ac plished without any one knowing it, except you, and my and a third person."

"And who is this third person?"

"The Prince."

"Has he come, as I have been told?"

"He came yesterday evening."

"And have you seen him?"

"I have just left him."

"And does he approve of this project?"

"It is his advice."

"And Paris?"

"He will starve it, and compel it to surrender at di tion."

"The project is not deficient in grandeur, and I can per only one impediment."

"What?"

"Its impossibility."

"A word entirely void of meaning. Nothing is in sible!"

"In design."

"In execution! Have we any money?"

"A little," said Mazarin, fearing lest Anne of Au should want to dip deeply into his purse.

"Have we any troops?"

"Five or six thousand men."

"*Have* we any courage?"

"Abundance."

"Then the thing is done. Oh! can you conceive, Giulio, — Paris — this odious Paris — awaking some morning without Queen, without King; invested, besieged, famished; having for all and only resource its stupid Parliament and its lean, bandy-legged coadjutor!"

"Delightful! delightful!" said Mazarin; "I can conceive the effect, but do not perceive the means of accomplishing it."

"I will find them."

"You understand that it is war — civil war — furious, desperate, and implacable?"

"Oh, yes, yes, war!" said Anne of Austria; "yes, I wish to reduce this rebellious City to ashes; I wish to quench the fire in blood; I wish that a fearful example should immortalise the crime by the punishment. Paris! I hate it — I detest it!"

"All very fine, Anne. You are indeed sanguinary! But take care: we are not in the times of the Malatesta, or of the Castruccio Castracani. You will get your head cut off, my fair Queen, and that would be a pity."

"You are laughing."

"I laugh but very little. A war against an entire people is a dangerous thing. Look at your brother, Charles I. He is in a bad state, a very bad state."

"We are in France, and I am Spanish."

"So much the worse, *per Bacco!* so much the worse. I should much prefer your being a Frenchwoman and myself a Frenchman; they would hate us both much less."

"And yet you approve of the plan?"

"Yes, if I saw that it was practicable."

"It is so, I tell you; so prepare for your departure."

"Me! I am always ready to go; only you know well enough I shall never go — and this time, probably, no more than the others."

"But, after all, if I go, will you not go too?"

"I will try."

"You kill me with your fears, Giulio; and what, after all, are you afraid of?"

"Of many things."

"What are they?"

Mazarin's countenance, from sarcastic, became serious.

"Anne," said he, "you are only a woman; and, as a woman,

you may insult men as you please, being sure of impunity. You accuse me of fear; I have not so much as you have, since I do not run away. Against whom are they crying out? Is it against you or against me? Whom do they wish to hang? Is it you or I? Well, then, I face the storm — I, whom you accuse of fear; but not like a braggadocio; that is not my way; I keep firm. Imitate me, then: not so much show, and more reality. You call out loud enough, but it ends in nothing. You talk of flying!"

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders, took the Queen's hand and led her to the window.

"Look!"

"Well?" said the Queen, blinded by her obstinacy.

"Well, what do you see from this window? If I am not mistaken, the citizens, with cuirasses and helmets, and armed with good muskets, as in the times of the League, and who are looking so earnestly at this window that you will be seen if you lift the curtains so high. Now, come to the other window. What do you see? People armed with halberds, guarding your gates. At every outlet from this palace, to which I could lead you, you would find the same thing. Your gates are guarded; even the air-holes of your cellars are guarded: and I might say to you, as the good La Ramée said of M. de Beaufort, unless you become a bird or a mouse you will not get out."

"And yet he got out."

"And do you reckon on getting out in the same manner?"

"So I am a prisoner?"

"Parblieu!" said Mazarin, "I have been proving it to you for an hour."

And Mazarin quietly resumed the writing of his despatch.

Anne, trembling with anger, flushed with humiliation, left the cabinet, violently slamming the door behind her.

Mazarin did not even turn his head.

Having reached her apartments, the Queen threw herself into a chair and began to weep.

Then in an instant, as if struck by a sudden idea:

"I am saved!" she cried, springing up. "Yes, yes! I know a man who will find means to get me out of Paris — a man whom I have too long forgotten." Then she added, in a thoughtful tone, yet with a feeling of joy: "Ungrateful that I am! For twenty years have I forgotten this man, whom I

ought to have made a marshal of France. My mother-in-law lavished gold, titles, and caresses on Concini, who destroyed her; the King made Vitry a marshal of France for an assassination; and I — I have left in oblivion, in poverty, that noble D'Artagnan, who saved me!"

And she hastened to a table, on which were paper and ink, and began to write.

CHAPTER LII.

THE INTERVIEW.

THAT morning D'Artagnan was sleeping in Porthos's chamber. It was a custom that the two friends had adopted since the disturbances. Their swords were under the bolster, and their pistols were on a table within reach of their hands.

D'Artagnan was still asleep and dreaming that the sky was covered by a large yellow cloud, that a shower of gold was falling from this cloud, and that he was holding his hat under a rain-spout.

Porthos, on his part, was dreaming that the panels of his carriage were not large enough for the arms which he was getting painted on them.

They were awoke at seven o'clock by a valet without livery, who brought a letter for D'Artagnan.

"From whom?" inquired the Gascon.

"From the Queen," answered the valet.

"Hein!" said Porthos, raising himself up in his bed, "what does he say?"

D'Artagnan requested the valet to go into an adjoining room, and when he had closed the door he jumped out of bed and read rapidly, while Porthos kept looking at him with all his eyes, not daring to question him.

"Friend Porthos," said D'Artagnan, holding out the letter to him, "here, at last, is your title of baron and my brevet of captain. There — read and judge for yourself."

Porthos stretched out his hand, took the letter, and read these words in a trembling voice:

"The Queen wishes to speak with M. d'Artagnan. Let him follow the bearer."

"Well!" said Porthos, "I see nothing extraordinary in that."

"I see much that is extraordinary in it," said D'Artagnan. "If they send for me, it is because things are in great perplexity! Only think a little: what a vast disturbance there must be in the Queen's mind to cause her to think of me after twenty years."

"That is true," said Porthos.

"Sharpen your sword, baron, load your pistols, give some oats to your horses. I answer for it that you will hear some news before to-morrow; and *motus!*"

"Ah! but is it not a snare that they are laying to get rid of us?" said Porthos, always thinking of the annoyance that his future grandeur would cause to some other person.

"If it is a trap," replied D'Artagnan, "make yourself easy; I will smell it out. If Mazarin is an Italian, I am a Gascon."

And D'Artagnan dressed in a twinkling.

While Porthos, still in bed, was clasping his cloak for him, there was another knock at the door.

"Come in!" said D'Artagnan.

A second valet entered.

"From his Eminence Cardinal Mazarin," said he.

D'Artagnan looked at Porthos.

"Ah! here is a complication," said Porthos; "which will you do first?"

"This falls out admirably well," replied D'Artagnan; "his Eminence makes an appointment with me for half an hour hence."

"Good."

"My friend," said D'Artagnan, turning to the valet, "tell his Eminence that in half an hour I shall be at his service."

The valet bowed and left the room.

"It is very fortunate that he did not see the other," said D'Artagnan.

"Why, do you think they do not both send for you for the same purpose?"

"I do not think so; I am certain of it."

"Come, come, D'Artagnan, quick! Remember that the Queen is waiting for you; after the Queen, the Cardinal; and after the Cardinal, I."

D'Artagnan called the Queen's valet.

"Here I am, my friend," said he; "conduct me to her *Majesty.*"

valet conducted him by the Rue des Petits-Champs, and,
g to the left, made him enter by a little garden door that
l into the Rue Richelieu. Then they gained a private
se, and D'Artagnan was introduced into the oratory.
rtain emotion, for which he could not account, made the
ant's heart beat. He had no longer the confidence of
and experience had taught him all the gravity of the
that had happened. He well knew what the dignity of
s and the majesty of kings really were; he had accus-
himself to class his own mediocrity after the splendours
tune and birth. Formerly he would have approached
of Austria as a young man addresses a woman. Now it
ite another thing: he came to her as a humble soldier to
strious chieftain.
ight noise broke the silence of the oratory. D'Artagnan
l, and saw a white hand lifting up the tapestry, and, by
pe, whiteness, and beauty, he recognised that royal hand
had one day been given him to kiss.
Queen entered.
is you, Monsieur D'Artagnan," said she, fixing on the
a look full of touching melancholy; "it is you — I re-
er you well. Look at me," she continued; "I am the
. Do you remember me?"
o, madame," replied D'Artagnan.
it do you no longer know," continued Anne of Austria,
t fascinating tone that, when she chose, she could impart
voice, "that the Queen formerly wanted a young cava-
rave and devoted; that she found this cavalier; and,
gh he might imagine she had forgotten him, that she has
place for him at the bottom of her heart?"
o, madame, I do not know that," replied the Musketeer.
much the worse, sir," continued Anne of Austria, "so
the worse, at least for the Queen; for the Queen has
eed of the same courage and of the same devotion."
hat!" said D'Artagnan; "the Queen, surrounded as she is
h devoted followers, such wise counsellors — men, in
o great by their merit or by their position, — does her
y deign to cast her eyes on an obscure soldier?"
e understood this concealed reproach; she was more
d than irritated by it. So much self-denial and disin-
dness, on the part of the Gascon gentleman, had often
ed her; she had let herself be vanquished in generosity.

"All that you say to me about those who surround me, M sieur d'Artagnan, is perhaps true," said the Queen; "but I confidence in you alone. I know that you are devoted to Cardinal; be so to me also, and I take charge of your fort Come, would you do for me now what that young gentle whom you do not know did formerly for the Queen?"

"I will do everything that your Majesty may comma said D'Artagnan.

The Queen reflected a moment, and seeing the Musket guarded manner:

"Perhaps you love repose?" she asked.

"I do not know, for I have never had any, madame."

"Have you any friends?"

"I had three. Two have left Paris, and I know not w they are gone. One only remains; it is one of those knew, I believe, the cavalier of whom your Majesty has me the honour to speak."

"Very well," said the Queen; "you and your friend worth an army."

"And what am I to do, madame?"

"Return at five o'clock and I will tell you. But do speak to a living soul, sir, of the appointment I have with you."

"No, madame."

"Swear it by your Saviour."

"Madame, I have never broken my word. When I say it is No."

The Queen, though astonished at this language, for courtiers had not accustomed her to it, drew from it a h omen of the zeal that D'Artagnan would display in her vice for the accomplishment of her project. It was one o Gascon's artifices sometimes to conceal his profound sub under the appearance of a loyal frankness.

"Has the Queen no further commands at present?" asked.

"No, sir," replied Anne of Austria, "and you may r until the time I have mentioned."

D'Artagnan bowed and left the room.

"*Diable!*" said he, when he was at the door; "it s that they have great need of me here."

Then, as the half-hour had elapsed, he crossed the gal *and knocked at* the Cardinal's door.

Bernouin ushered him in.

"I am come at your command, monsignor," said he.

And, according to his usual habit, he cast a rapid glance all about, and perceived that Mazarin had a sealed letter before him. It was, however, laid on the desk on the written side, so that it was impossible to see to whom it was directed.

"Are you come from the Queen?" asked Mazarin, looking earnestly at D'Artagnan.

"I, monsignor? Who told you so?"

"No one; but I know it."

"I am extremely sorry to tell monsignor that he is mistaken," replied the Gascon, with the greatest audacity, and strong in the promise that he had just made Anne of Austria.

"I opened the door of the antechamber myself, and saw you coming from the end of the gallery."

"It is because I was brought up by the private staircase."

"And why was that?"

"I do not know; it must have been by some mistake."

Mazarin knew that it was not easy to make D'Artagnan tell what he wished to conceal; he therefore gave up, for the moment, the attempt to discover the secret that the Gascon kept from him.

"Let us speak of my business," said the Cardinal, "since you will not tell me anything of your own."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"Are you fond of travelling?" asked the Cardinal.

"I have passed my life on the highways."

"Would anything keep you in Paris?"

"Nothing would keep me here except a superior order."

"Very well; here is a letter which must be delivered according to its address."

"To its address, monsignor? But there is none."

In fact, the side opposite the seal was without any writing whatever.

"That is to say," replied Mazarin, "there is a double envelope."

"I understand; and I must tear open the first when I have reached a given place."

"Exactly so. Take it and depart. You have a friend, M. du Vallon, whom I greatly esteem; you will take him with you."

Diable!" said D'Artagnan to himself; "he knows that we

heard his conversation yesterday, and wishes to remove us from Paris."

"Do you hesitate?" demanded Mazarin.

"No, monsignor, and I will depart immediately. But I should wish one thing"—

"And what is that? Tell me."

"It is that monsignor would go to the Queen."

"When?"

"Immediately."

"What for?"

"Only to say these words to her: 'I am sending M. d'Artagnan somewhere, and I have ordered him to set off instantly.'"

"It is now evident enough," said Mazarin, "that you have seen the Queen."

"I have had the honour to inform your Eminence that there has possibly been a mistake."

"What does that mean?" demanded Mazarin.

"May I venture to renew my request to your Eminence?"

"Very well, I will go there. Wait for me here."

Mazarin looked carefully around to see if any key had been left in one of the desks, and then left the room.

Ten minutes elapsed, during which D'Artagnan did his best to read through the first envelope what was written on the second, but he could not accomplish it.

Mazarin returned, pale and in deep thought, and sat down at his desk. D'Artagnan studied him as he had just studied the letter; but the envelope of his countenance was almost as impenetrable as that of the letter.

"Ah!" thought the Gascon, "he looks annoyed; can it be against me? He reflects; is it about sending me to the Bastille? Very fine, monsignor! But at the first intimation of it I will strangle you and turn Frondeur. I shall be carried in triumph like M. Broussel; and Athos will proclaim me the French Brutus. That would be comical!"

The Gascon, with his ever-galloping imagination, had already settled everything he should do, according to circumstances.

But Mazarin gave no order of this kind. On the contrary, he began to give D'Artagnan the velvet paw.

"You were right, my dear Monsou d'Artagnan," said he to *him*; "you cannot leave Paris yet."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan.

"So give me back that despatch, I pray."

D'Artagnan obeyed. Mazarin assured himself that the seal was intact.

"I shall want you this evening," said he; "return at five o'clock."

"At five o'clock, your Excellence, I have an appointment that I must keep," said D'Artagnan.

"Do not let that distress you," said Mazarin; "it is the same."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "I suspected it."

"Return, then, at five o'clock, and bring that dear M. de Vallon with you. But leave him in the antechamber; I wish to talk to you alone."

D'Artagnan bowed; and while bowing he said to himself:

"Both the same order, both the same hour, both at the Palais Royal. I have it. Ah! there is a secret for which M. de Gondy would have paid a hundred thousand livres!"

"You reflect?" said Mazarin rather anxiously.

"Yes; I was asking myself whether we should come armed or not."

"Armed to the teeth," said Mazarin.

"Very well, monsignor," said D'Artagnan; "it shall be so."

D'Artagnan bowed, left the room, and hastened to repeat Mazarin's flattering promises to his friend, which put Porthos into inconceivably high spirits.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE FLIGHT.

In spite of the agitated state of the City, the Palais Royal presented one of the most brilliant spectacles when, at five o'clock, D'Artagnan repaired thither. This was not surprising. The Queen had restored Broussel and Blancmesnil to the people; the Queen had, therefore, nothing more to fear, as the people had nothing more to demand. The present disturbance was, therefore, merely a remnant of their agitation, which only required *time* to calm itself; as after a storm it

often requires many days for the swell of the waves to sub
tle down.

There had been a great banquet, for which the return of
the conqueror of Lens was the pretext. The princes and
princesses were invited, and carriages had blocked up the
courts since mid-day. After the dinner there was to be play
in the Queen's apartments.

Anne of Austria was that day charming, alike from her
grace and talent. Never had she been seen in a gayer hu
mour. Vengeance, in full blossom, shone in her eyes and
smiled on her lips.

The moment they rose from table Mazarin disappear
D'Artagnan, already at his post, was waiting in the antero
The Cardinal appeared with a smiling countenance, took h
by the hand and led him into his cabinet.

"My dear Monsou d'Artagnan," said the minister, seat
himself, "I am going to give you the greatest mark of co
dence that a minister can give an officer."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"I hope," said he, "that monsignor gives it me with
any reserve whatever, and with the conviction that I
serve it."

"You deserve it more than any one, my dear friend; th
fore I apply to you."

"Very well," said D'Artagnan; "and I will confess to
monsignor, that I have been long looking forward to such
opportunity as this. Therefore tell me quickly what
have to impart to me."

"This evening, my dear Monsou d'Artagnan, you will h
the safety of the State in your hands," replied Mazarin.

He paused.

"Explain yourself. I am all attention."

"The Queen has determined to take a short journey
evening to Saint Germain with the King."

"Aha!" said D'Artagnan; "that is to say, the Queen wi
to leave Paris."

"You understand — a woman's caprice."

"Yes, I understand very well," said D'Artagnan.

"It was on that account she sent for you this morning,
told you to return this evening."

"And a mighty matter it was to want me to swear th
would mention this appointment to no one!" muttered D

nan. "Ah, women! Although they are queens, they are ver women!"

"Would you disapprove of this little journey, my dear nsou d'Artagnan?" demanded Mazarin, with some xiety.

"I, monsignor?" said D'Artagnan; "and why should I?"

"Because you shrug your shoulders."

"It is a way I have of talking to myself, monsignor."

"So you approve of this journey?"

"I neither approve nor disapprove, monsignor; I merely await your orders."

"Very well. So I have fixed on you to transport the King and Queen to Saint Germain."

"Deceitful knave!" said D'Artagnan to himself.

"You perceive, therefore," continued Mazarin, seeing D'Artagnan's impassibility, "that, as I told you, the safety of the State will be intrusted to you."

"Yes, monsignor; and I feel all the responsibility of such a charge."

"You undertake it, however?"

"I always undertake."

"You think the thing possible?"

"Everything is possible."

"Shall you be attacked on the road?"

"Very probably."

"What will you do in that case?"

"I will pass through those who attack me."

"And should you not pass through them?"

"Then so much the worse for them — I will pass over them."

"And you will take the King and Queen safe to Saint Germain?"

"Yes."

"On your life?"

"On my life."

"You are a hero, my dear!" said Mazarin, looking at the Musketeer with admiration.

D'Artagnan smiled.

"And I myself?" said Mazarin, after a moment's silence and looking earnestly at D'Artagnan.

"How! And you, your Excellence?"

"And I myself, should I wish to leave Paris?"

"That would be more difficult. Your Eminence might be recognised."

"Even under this disguise?" said Mazarin. And he raised a cloak that covered a chair, on which was a cavalier's complete suit of grey pearl and garnet, with a profusion of silver lace.

"If your Eminence is disguised, it will certainly make it much easier."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, breathing again.

"But it will be necessary to do what your Eminence said, the other day, you would have done in our place."

"And what will it be necessary to do?"

"To shout, 'Down with Mazarin!'"

"I will shout."

"In French, in good French, monsignor; be careful of the accent. Six thousand Angevins were killed in Sicily because they pronounced Italian badly. Take care that the French do not avenge themselves on you for the Sicilian Vespers!"

"I will do my best."

"There are many armed men in the streets," continued D'Artagnan; "are you quite sure that no one has been made acquainted with the Queen's project?"

Mazarin reflected.

"It would be a fine thing for a traitor, monsignor, this affair you propose to me. The danger of an attack would be an ample excuse."

Mazarin shuddered; but he reflected that a man who intended to betray him would not warn him of it. So he said, with some vivacity:

"I do not trust every one; and the proof is, that I have chosen you to escort me."

"Then do you not go with the Queen?"

"No," said Mazarin.

"Oh! you go after the Queen?"

"No," again said Mazarin.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, who began to comprehend.

"Yes, I have my own plans," continued Mazarin. "With the Queen, I should double the chances against her; after the Queen, her departure would double mine; then, the Court once safe, they might forget me. Great people are ungrateful."

"That is true," said D'Artagnan, casting an involuntary glance at the Queen's diamond, which Mazarin had on his *finger.*

Mazarin followed the direction of his eyes, and gently urned the bezel of his ring inward.

"So," said Mazarin, with his wily smile, "I wish to prevent heir being ungrateful to me."

"That is Christian charity," said D'Artagnan, "not to lead our neighbour into temptation."

"It is precisely on that account," said Mazarin, "that I wish o depart before them."

D'Artagnan smiled; he was exactly the man to understand his Italian craftiness.

Mazarin saw him smile, and took advantage of the moment.

"You will, therefore, begin by taking me from Paris first— vill you not, my dear Monsou d'Artagnan?"

"A rough commission, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, resuming his grave air.

"But," said Mazarin, looking very earnestly at him, that no one expression of his countenance might escape him, — "but you did not make all these observations about the King and he Queen."

"The King and the Queen are my King and Queen, monsignor," replied the Musketeer; "my life is theirs — I owe it o them — they demand it of me; and I have nothing to say."

"It is true," muttered Mazarin, in a low voice; "therefore, as your life does not belong to me, I must purchase it of you — nust I not?"

And sighing deeply he again turned the bezel of his ring out.

D'Artagnan smiled.

These two men matched each other in one point, and that s — cunning. Had they sympathised in the same manner as o courage, the one would have made the other perform great actions.

"But," said Mazarin, "you understand that if I ask this service of you, it is with the intention of being grateful for t."

"Has monsignor yet only reached the intention?" said D'Artagnan.

"Here," said Mazarin, drawing the ring from his finger, 'here, my dear Monsou d'Artagnan, is a diamond that formerly belonged to you: it is just that it should return to you. Take t, I beg of you."

D'Artagnan did not give Mazarin the trouble of pressing him. He took the ring, looked to see if it was really the same stone, and, having satisfied himself that the water was pure, he put it on his finger with indescribable satisfaction.

"I much valued it," said Mazarin, giving it a last lingering look; "but never mind; I give it you with great pleasure."

"And I, monsignor," replied D'Artagnan, "receive it in the same spirit with which it is given. Come, let us talk over our little affairs. You wish to depart before the others?"

"Yes, I greatly desire it."

"At what time?"

"At ten o'clock."

"And at what hour does the Queen depart?"

"At midnight."

"Then it is possible. I can get you out of Paris, leave you beyond the barrier, and then return for her."

"Admirably arranged. But how will you get me out of Paris?"

"Oh, as to that, you must let me follow my own plans."

"I give you full powers; take as large an escort as you like."

D'Artagnan shook his head.

"It appears to me, however, to be the safest way," said Mazarin.

"Yes, for you, monsignor, but not for the Queen."

Mazarin bit his lips.

"Then what must we do?"

"You must leave it to me, monsignor."

"Hum!" said Mazarin.

"And give me the entire direction of this affair."

"Nevertheless" —

"Or find some other person," said D'Artagnan, turning his back.

"Ah!" said Mazarin, in a low voice, "I verily believe he is going off with the diamond." And he called him back. "Monsou d'Artagnan! my dear Monsou d'Artagnan!" said he, in his most caressing voice.

"Monsignor?"

"Do you answer for everything?"

"I answer for nothing — I will do my best."

"Your best?"

"*Yes.*"

"Well, then, I depend upon you."

"That is very fortunate," said D'Artagnan to himself.

"You will be here, then, at half-past nine?"

"Shall I find your Eminence ready?"

"Certainly; quite ready."

"So then it is all settled. Now, monsignor, will you let me see the Queen?"

"For what purpose?"

"I should wish to take her Majesty's orders from her own lips."

"She directed me to give them to you."

"She may have forgotten something."

"You insist on seeing her?"

"It is indispensable, monsignor."

Mazarin hesitated a moment. D'Artagnan remained immovable in his determination.

"Come, then," said Mazarin, "I will conduct you to her; but not one word of our conversation."

"What we have said only concerns ourselves, monsignor," replied D'Artagnan.

"You swear to be silent?"

"I never swear, monsignor. I say Yes or I say No; and as I am a gentleman, I keep my word."

"Well, I perceive that I must confide in you, without any restriction."

"It is much the best plan, believe me, monsignor."

"Come," said Mazarin.

The Cardinal ushered D'Artagnan into the oratory, and told him to wait there. He did not wait long. In five minutes the Queen entered, in grand gala costume. Thus adorned, she looked scarcely thirty-five years old, and was very beautiful.

"Is it you, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" said she, smiling graciously; "I thank you for having insisted on seeing me."

"I crave your Majesty's pardon," said D'Artagnan; "but I wished to receive your orders from your own lips."

"You know what is under discussion?"

"Yes, madame."

"You accept the commission I intrust to you?"

"With gratitude."

"Very well — be here at midnight."

"I will be here."

"M. d'Artagnan," said the Queen, "I know your disinter-

estedness too well to talk to you of my gratitude at this moment; but I swear that I will not forget this second service as I have forgotten the first."

"Your Majesty is at liberty either to remember or to forget, and I do not know what you mean."

And D'Artagnan bowed.

"Go, sir," said the Queen, with her most charming smile, — "go, and return at midnight."

She waved her hand as a token of adieu, and D'Artagnan departed; but as he withdrew he cast his eyes at the door through which the Queen had entered, and at the bottom of the tapestry he saw the end of a velvet slipper.

"Good," said he; "Mazarin was listening to hear whether I betrayed him. Really that Italian puppet does not deserve the services of a man of honour."

Yet D'Artagnan was none the less punctual to his appointment. At half-past nine he entered the antechamber.

Bernouin was in attendance, and introduced him.

He found the Cardinal dressed as a cavalier. He looked exceedingly well in this costume, which he wore, as we have said, with elegance; only he was now rather pale and trembled a little.

"Are you quite alone?" said Mazarin.

"Yes, monsignor."

"And that excellent M. du Vallon? Shall we not have the pleasure of his company?"

"Yes, monsignor; he is waiting in his carriage."

"Where is it?"

"At the garden door of the Palais Royal."

"So we are going in his carriage?"

"Yes, monsignor."

"And without any other escort than you two?"

"Is not that enough? One of us would suffice."

"Really, my dear M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you quite frighten me with your coolness."

"I should have thought, on the contrary, that it would inspire confidence."

"Shall I not take Bernouin with me?"

"There is no room for him; he will follow, your Eminence."

"Well, then," said Mazarin, "I must do as you say in everything."

‘ Monsignor, there is still time to draw back,” said D’Artagnan; “ and your Eminence is perfectly at liberty.”
‘ No, no,” said Mazarin, “ let us go.”
And they went down the private staircase, Mazarin leaning on D’Artagnan. The Musketeer felt the Cardinal’s arm trembling on his own.
They crossed the courts of the Palais Royal, where some carriages, belonging to late guests, still remained; they entered the garden and reached the little door.
Mazarin took the key from his pocket and attempted to open the gate, but his hand trembled so much that he could not find the keyhole.
‘ Give it to me,” said D’Artagnan.
Mazarin gave him the key. D’Artagnan opened the gate and put the key into his pocket; he intended to return the same way.
The steps of the carriage were down, the door was open; Mousqueton was standing by it. Porthos was at the back part of the vehicle.
“ Step in, monsignor,” said D’Artagnan.
Mazarin did not wait to be told twice, but jumped into the carriage.
D’Artagnan entered after him. Mousqueton shut the door, and then hoisted himself up behind the carriage with many a groan. He had made some objection to coming, under pretence of his wound, which still gave him great pain; but D’Artagnan had said to him:
“ Remain, if you prefer it, my dear Monsieur Mouston; but I warn you that Paris will be burnt to-night.”
Whereupon Mousqueton made no further demur, but declared that he was ready to follow his master and M. d’Artagnan to the end of the world.
The carriage set off at a gentle trot, such as did not in the least denote that it contained people who were at all in a hurry. The Cardinal wiped his forehead with his handkerchief and looked around him.
He had Porthos on his left and D’Artagnan on his right. Each guarded a door — each served him as a rampart.
Opposite, on the cushion in front, were two pairs of pistols — one pair before Porthos, another before D’Artagnan. The two friends had likewise their swords by their sides.
At a hundred paces from the Palais Royal a patrol stopped the carriage.

"Who goes there?" demanded the leader.

"Mazarin!" replied D'Artagnan, bursting out laughing.

The Cardinal felt his hair bristling up on his head.

The joke appeared excellent to the citizens, who, seeing carriage without arms on the panels and without an escort, nev could have believed the reality of such an act of imprudence.

"A good journey!" cried they, and let them pass on.

"Hem!" said D'Artagnan; "what does monsignor thi of that answer?"

"A man of talent!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"In fact," said Porthos, "I understand"—

About the middle of the Rue des Petits-Champs anoth patrol stopped the carriage.

"Who goes there?" said the leader.

"Fall back, monsignor," said D'Artagnan.

And Mazarin buried himself so completely between the t friends that he was entirely concealed by them.

"Who goes there?" repeated the same voice, with i patience.

D'Artagnan perceived that certain men were throwing the selves before the horses; he thrust his body half out of t carriage.

"Ha! Planchet," cried he.

The leader approached; it was really Planchet. D'Ar gnan had recognised the voice of his former lacquey.

"How, sir!" said Planchet; "is it you?"

"Oh, mon Dieu, yes, my good friend. Our dear Porth has just received a sword wound, and I am taking him to h country house at St. Cloud."

"Really!" said Planchet.

"Porthos," continued D'Artagnan, "if you can yet spea my dear Porthos, say one word to our good friend Planchet

"Planchet, my friend," said Porthos, in a doleful voice, " am very ill, and should you meet with a doctor, you will me a great kindness by sending him to me."

"Ah, grand Dieu," said Planchet, "what a misfortun And how did this happen?"

"I will tell you all about it," said Mousqueton.

Porthos emitted a deep groan.

"Clear the way for us, Planchet," said D'Artagnan, in a lo voice, "or he will not reach home alive. The lungs a *injured, my friend.*"

Planchet shook his head, as if to say, "In that case, it is a bad business."

Then, turning to his men: "Let them pass," said he; "they are friends."

The carriage resumed its progress, and Mazarin, who had held his breath, ventured to breathe again.

"*Bricconi!*" he muttered.

A few paces before they reached the gate of Saint Honoré, they met a third troop; this was composed of very ill-looking people, who rather resembled banditti than anything else; they were the men belonging to the mendicant of Saint Eustache.

"Attention, Porthos!" said D'Artagnan.

Porthos stretched out his hand toward his pistols.

"What is the matter?" said Mazarin.

"Monsignor, I believe that we are in bad company."

A man came up to the door, holding a kind of scythe in his hand.

"Who goes there?" said this man.

"Ah, rascal!" answered D'Artagnan, "do you not know the Prince's carriage?"

"Prince or not," said the man, "open the door. We are guarding this gate, and no one shall pass through whom we do not know."

"What must we do?" said Porthos.

"Pass, pardieu!" replied D'Artagnan.

"But how can we pass?" inquired Mazarin.

"Through them or over them! Gallop on, coachman!"

The coachman raised his whip.

"Not one step farther," cried the man, who appeared the leader, "or I cut the throats of your horses."

"Confound it!" said Porthos, "that would be a pity; the beasts cost me a hundred pistoles each."

"I will pay you two hundred for them," said Mazarin.

"Yes; but when their throats are cut, they will cut ours."

"There is one coming up on my side," said Porthos; "shall I kill him?"

"Yes, with a blow of your fist, if you can; do not fire, except at the last extremity."

"I can do that," said Porthos.

"Come and open the door," said D'Artagnan to the man with the scythe, taking one of his pistols by the barrel and preparing to strike with the butt.

This man approached.

As he came up, D'Artagnan, to be more free in his mov ments, got half out of the door; his eyes were fixed on t mendicant's face, which was illumined by the light of lantern.

The mendicant certainly recognised the Musketeer, for turned very pale; D'Artagnan certainly recognised him, f his hair bristled up on his head.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, starting bac "Monsieur d'Artagnan! Let them pass."

Perhaps D'Artagnan would also have spoken; but at th moment a blow was heard, like that of a hammer falling up the head of an ox; it was Porthos, who had just knocked do his man. D'Artagnan turned, and saw the unlucky wret lying four yards off.

"Now, full speed!" he cried to the coachman; "qui quick!"

The coachman gave the horses a tremendous cut with h whip; the noble animals bounded forward; cries, like those men knocked down, were heard; then they felt a doul jerk — both wheels had just passed over a round and flexil body; there was now a moment's silence; the carriage pass through the gate.

"To the Cours-la-Reine!" cried D'Artagnan to the coachma Then, turning to Mazarin: "Now, monsignor," said he, "y may say five *paters* and five *aves*, to thank God for your del erance. You are saved! You are free!"

Mazarin only answered by a sort of groan; he could hard credit such a miracle.

Five minutes afterward the carriage stopped; it had reach the Cours-la-Reine.

"Is monsignor satisfied with his escort?" demanded t Musketeer.

"Enchanted, monsou," replied Mazarin, venturing to look o of one of the windows. "Now, do the same for the Queen."

"That will be less difficult," said D'Artagnan, leaping out the carriage. "M. du Vallon, I recommend his Eminence your care."

"Make yourself perfectly easy about that," said Porth stretching out his hand.

D'Artagnan took hold of it and shook it.

"*Ah — oh!*" cried Porthos.

D'Artagnan looked at his friend with astonishment. "What is the matter with you?" said he.

"I believe that I have sprained my hand," said Porthos.

"Why the devil do you hit so unmercifully hard, then?"

"I was obliged. My man was going to fire a pistol at me. But how did you get rid of yours?"

"Oh! mine," said D'Artagnan, "was not a man."

"What was he, then?"

"A spectre."

"And" —

"I conjured him away."

Without further explanation, D'Artagnan took his pistols, put them into his girdle, wrapped his cloak around him, and, not wishing to return by the same barrier as he had come out, he walked towards the Richelieu gate.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE COADJUTOR'S CARRIAGE.

INSTEAD of returning by the Porte Saint Honoré, D'Artagnan, who had plenty of time before him, made a circuit, and entered by the Porte Richelieu. He was here examined; and when, by his plumed hat and laced cloak, it was ascertained that he was an officer of Musketeers, they surrounded him, with the intention of making him shout, "Down with Mazarin!" This demonstration rather disquieted him at first; but when he found what they required, he shouted the cry so heartily that even the most difficult were satisfied.

He then proceeded down the Rue Richelieu, meditating on the method by which he should carry off the Queen; for to get her out in a carriage bearing the arms of France was not to be thought of. At the door of Madame de Guémenée's hôtel he saw an equipage. A sudden idea illumined his mind.

"Ah, pardieu!" said he, "that would be a good stratagem of war."

And he went up to the carriage, and examined the arms on its panels and the livery of the coachman on the box.

This examination was the easier as the coachman was sleeping, with the reins in his hands.

"It is certainly the coadjutor's carriage," said he. word, I begin to think that Providence favours us."

He quietly seated himself in the carriage, and, pul silken cord that was attached to the coachman's little

"To the Palais Royal," said he.

The coachman, so suddenly awakened, immediately the direction ordered, never doubting but that the or from his master. The Swiss was just closing the g seeing such a splendid equipage, he concluded that i important visitor, and allowed the carriage to pass. I under the peristyle.

The coachman now first perceived that the lacqueys behind the carriage. Imagining that the coadjutor h wise employed them, he leaped from his box, and, stil the reins, came and opened the door.

D'Artagnan jumped out of the carriage, and at moment that the coachman, terrified at perceiving a started back, he seized him by the collar with his l and presented a pistol to his head with the right.

"Attempt to utter one word," said D'Artagnan, " are a dead man."

The coachman saw by the speaker's expression tha fallen into some ambush, and he stood with gaping m staring eyes.

Two Musketeers were walking in the courtyard.

"Monsieur de Bellière," said D'Artagnan to one " be so kind as to take the reins from this fine fellow; upon the box, drive the carriage to the door of the priv case, and wait for me there. It is on an affair of im and is on the King's service."

The Musketeer, who knew that his officer was inc any foolish pleasantry in affairs of duty, obeyed wit ing a word, though he thought the order singular.

Then, turning toward the second Musketeer:

"Monsieur du Verger," said D'Artagnan, "assis conducting this man to a place of security."

The Musketeer supposed that his officer had just some prince in disguise; he bowed and, drawing h signified that he was ready.

D'Artagnan mounted the stairs, followed by his who was himself followed by the Musketeer. The *the vestibule* and entered Mazarin's antechamber.

Bernouin was anxiously waiting for news from his master.

"Well, sir!" said he.

"Everything goes on admirably well, my dear Monsieur Bernouin; but here is a man whom we must put into a place of security, if you please."

"Where, sir?"

"Wherever you please, provided the place you choose has shutters fastened by a padlock and a door that locks."

"We have that," said Bernouin.

And they took the poor coachman into a closet with grated windows, which much resembled a prison.

"Now, my good friend," said D'Artagnan, "I must request you instantly to do me the favor of letting me have your hat and cloak."

The coachman, as may be supposed, made no resistance. Besides, he was so astounded at what had happened that he actually tottered and stammered like a drunken man. D'Artagnan put everything on the arm of the *valet-de-chambre.*

"Now, M. du Verger," said he, "shut yourself up with this man till M. Bernouin comes to open the door for you. The duty will be a pretty long one, and not very amusing. I am aware of that; but you understand," he added gravely, "the King's service."

"At your command, lieutenant," replied the Musketeer, who saw that important matters were at stake.

"By the way," said D'Artagnan, "should this man attempt to escape or to call out, run your sword through him."

The Musketeer made a sign with his head, which meant to say that he would punctually obey the order.

D'Artagnan left the room, taking Bernouin with him. It was striking midnight.

"Take me into the Queen's oratory," said he; "inform her that I am here, and then take that bundle, with a musketoon well loaded, and put them on the box of the carriage that is waiting at the door of the private staircase."

Bernouin ushered D'Artagnan into the oratory, where he sat down in a very thoughtful mood.

Everything had been going on as usual at the Palais Royal. At ten o'clock, as we have before said, almost all the guests had retired. Those who were to flee with the Court had received their instructions, and each was requested to be at the Cours-la-Reine between midnight and one in the morning.

At ten o'clock Anne of Austria went to the King's r
They had just put Monsieur to bed; and the young I
having remained up the last, was amusing himself by pl
leaden soldiers in order of battle, a game in which he gr
delighted. Two pages of honour were playing with him.

"Laporte," said the Queen, "it must be time to pu
Majesty to bed."

The King begged to remain up longer, not being s
sleepy, as he said; but the Queen insisted, saying:

"Are you not going to bathe at Conflans to-morrow mo
at six o'clock, Louis? You requested to do so yourself
am not mistaken."

"You are right, madame," said the King, "and I am r
to go to my chamber if you will kiss me. Laporte, giv
candle to the Chevalier de Coislin."

The Queen pressed her lips on the smooth white fore
which the august boy held toward her with a gravity
already savoured of etiquette.

"Go quickly to sleep, Louis," said the Queen, "for
will be awakened early."

"I will do my best to obey you, madame," said the y
Louis, "but I am not at all sleepy."

"Laporte," said Anne of Austria, "look for a very
book to read to his Majesty; but do not undress your

The King left the room, accompanied by the Chevali
Coislin, who carried the candle. The other page of h
was sent home.

Then the Queen went to her own apartment. Her ladi
that is to say, Madame de Brégy, Mademoiselle de Beau
Madame de Motteville, and Socratine, her sister, whom
thus designated on account of her learning — had just bro
her, into her dressing-room, something that was left over
her dinner, and she supped on it according to custom.

The Queen then gave her orders as usual; talked of a
quet that the Marquis de Villequier was to give her o
day after the morrow; fixed on the persons to whom
would allow the honour of being there; announced fo
next day a visit to Val-de-Grâce, where she intended to
her devotions; and gave her orders to Béringhen, her prin
valet-de-chambre, to accompany her there.

After she had finished supper the Queen pretended t
greatly fatigued, and retired to her bedchamber. Madam

lotteville, who was in close attendance that evening, followed er and assisted her to undress. The Queen went to bed, poke kindly to her for some minutes, and dismissed her.

It was at this moment that D'Artagnan entered the court of ıe Palais Royal, with the coadjutor's carriage.

An instant after, the carriages of the ladies of honour left ıe palace, and the gates were closed.

It was striking midnight. Five minutes after, Bernouin, roceeding by the Cardinal's secret passage, knocked at the ueen's bedchamber.

Anne of Austria herself opened the door.

She was already dressed; that is to say, she had put on her ockings and enveloped herself in a long dressing-gown.

"Is it you, Bernouin?" said she. "Is M. d'Artagnan ıere?"

"Yes, madame, in your oratory; he is waiting until your ajesty is ready."

"I am ready. Go and tell Laporte to awaken and dress the ing, and then go to Maréchal de Villeroy and call him for me."

Bernouin bowed and left the room.

The Queen went to her oratory, which was lighted by one mple lamp of Venetian glass. She saw D'Artagnan standing ıere, awaiting her coming.

"Is it you?" said she to him.

"Yes, madame."

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

"And the Cardinal?"

"Has left without accident; he is waiting for your Majesty Cours-la-Reine."

"But in what carriage are we to go?"

"I have provided for everything. A carriage is waiting our Majesty below."

"Let us go to the King's room."

D'Artagnan bowed and followed the Queen.

The young Louis was already dressed, except his shoes and oublet. He was allowing this to be done in great astonish- ıent, overwhelming Laporte with questions, to which he only nswered:

"Sire, it is by the Queen's command."

The bed was turned down and exposed the King's sheets; ıey were so much worn as to be in holes in some places.

This was one of the effects of Mazarin's niggardliness.

The Queen entered, and D'Artagnan remained at the doo The boy, seeing the Queen, escaped from Laporte and ran t to her.

The Queen made a sign for D'Artagnan to approach. I obeyed.

"My son," said Anne of Austria, pointing to the Musket who stood calm and uncovered, — "here is M. d'Artagnan, is as brave as one of those ancient knights whose hist you so much love to hear recounted by my ladies. Impr his name upon your memory and look at him well, that may not forget his face, for this night he will render us gr service."

The young King looked at the officer with his full, pr eyes and said:

"M. d'Artagnan!"

"That is right, my son."

Louis slowly raised his little hand and held it out to Musketeer, who knelt and kissed it.

"M. d'Artagnan," repeated Louis; "very well, madame."

At this moment a noise was heard coming nearer.

"What is that?" asked the Queen.

"Oh!" replied D'Artagnan, straining, at the same time, quick ears and his keen eyes, "it is the noise of the peo who are in commotion."

"We must flee," said the Queen.

"Your Majesty has given me the direction of this affa we must remain and hear what they want."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!"

"I take the whole responsibility."

Nothing is more contagious than confidence. The Que full of energy and courage herself, highly appreciated th two qualities in others.

"Do as you like," she said; "I rely on you."

"Will your Majesty permit me, throughout this affair, give orders in your name?"

"Command, sir."

"What do the people want now?" inquired the King.

"We shall soon know, sire," replied D'Artagnan; and hastily left the room.

The tumult went on increasing. It seemed entirely to s round the Palais Royal. Those within could hear cries, t

eaning of which they could not distinguish. It was evident at there was outcry and sedition.

The half-dressed King, the Queen, and Laporte remained ch in the same state, and almost in the same place, listening d waiting.

Comminges, who was that night on guard at the Palais yal, ran up. He had about two hundred men in the courts d stables, and placed them at the Queen's disposal.

"Well," said Anne of Austria, on seeing D'Artagnan return, vhat is the trouble?"

"The trouble is, madame, a report has been spread that the een has left the Palais Royal, carrying the King away with r, and the people demand to have proof of the contrary, or ey threaten to pull down the Palais Royal."

"Oh! this time it is too much," said the Queen, "and I will ıvince them that I am not gone."

D'Artagnan saw by the expression of the Queen's face that e was going to give some violent order. He went up to her d said, in a low voice:

"Has your Majesty confidence in me still?"

This voice made her start.

"Yes, sir; entire confidence," she replied. "Speak!"

"Will the Queen deign to act according to my advice?"

"Speak."

"Let your Majesty dismiss M. de Comminges, and order him shut himself up, with his men, in the guard-room and the ıbles."

Comminges looked at D'Artagnan with that jealous look th which every courtier sees a new fortune in the as-ıdant.

"Did you hear, Comminges?" said the Queen.

D'Artagnan went to him. With his usual sagacity he had ceived his look of annoyance.

"Monsieur de Comminges," said he, "pardon me. We are th the Queen's servants, are we not? It is my turn to be eful to her, so do not envy me this good fortune."

Comminges bowed and left the room.

"There," said D'Artagnan to himself, "now I have one ore enemy."

"And now," said the Queen, turning to D'Artagnan, "what ıst we do? — for you hear, instead of ceasing, the noise re-ubles."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "the people wish to see the King. They must see him."

"What! They must see him! And where? On the balcony?"

"No, madame; but here in his bed, sleeping."

"Oh, your Majesty, M. d'Artagnan is quite right!" exclaimed Laporte.

The Queen reflected, and then smiled like a woman to whom duplicity is no stranger.

"Very well," she muttered.

"Monsieur Laporte," said D'Artagnan, "go and announce to the people, through the bars of the gates of the Palais Royal, that they shall be satisfied, and that in five minutes they shall not only see the King, but that they shall even see him in his bed. Add that the King is asleep, and that the Queen entreats them to be quiet so as not to awake him."

"But not every one — only a deputation of two or three persons."

"Every one, madame."

"But they will delay us till daylight. Think of that!"

"It will last about a quarter of an hour. I answer for everything, madame. Believe me, I know the people: they are like a great baby, that requires nothing but coaxing. Before the sleeping King they will be silent, gentle, and timid as lambs."

"Go, Laporte," said the Queen.

The young King went up to his mother.

"Why comply with the people's demands?" he inquired.

"It is necessary, my son," said Anne of Austria.

"But then, if they say to me, '*You must*,' I am no longer King."

The Queen remained silent.

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "will your Majesty allow me to ask you a question?"

Louis XIV. turned, astonished that any one dared thus to address him; but the Queen pressed the boy's hand.

"Yes, sir," said he.

"Does your Majesty remember, when you were playing in the park at Fontainebleau, or in the court of the palace of Versailles, ever to have seen the heavens suddenly overcast and to have heard the noise of thunder?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, however desirous your Majesty might be of laying longer, this noise of the thunder said to you: 'Sire, you must go in.'"

"Undoubtedly, sir; but I have also been told that the thunder was the voice of God."

"Well, sire," replied D'Artagnan, "listen to the noise of the people, and you will perceive that it much resembles that of thunder."

In fact, at that moment an awful noise, borne along by the night breeze, reached their ears.

It suddenly ceased.

"Observe, sire," said D'Artagnan: "they have just told the people that you are asleep; you see that you are still King."

The Queen looked with astonishment at this singular man, whose brilliant courage made him equal to the bravest, and whose keen and crafty intellect made him inferior to none.

Laporte returned.

"Well, Laporte?" demanded the Queen.

"Madame," he replied, "M. d'Artagnan's prediction is accomplished: they have become calm, as if by enchantment. The doors are going to be opened to them, and in five minutes they will be here."

"Laporte," said the Queen, "could you not put one of your sons in the King's place? We might go off in the meantime."

"If your Majesty commands it," said Laporte, "my sons, as well as myself, are at the Queen's service."

"No," said D'Artagnan; "for if only one of them should know his Majesty, and should discover the subterfuge, all would be lost."

"You are right, sir, — always right," said the Queen. "Laporte, put the King to bed."

Laporte placed the King, dressed as he was, in bed, and then covered him up, even to the shoulders, with the clothes.

The Queen bent over him and kissed his forehead.

"Pretend to sleep, Louis," said she.

"Yes," said the King, "but I do not wish one of these men to touch me."

"Sire, I am here," said D'Artagnan, "and I promise you that if any one should have the audacity to do so, he shall atone for it by his life."

"Now what must we do?" demanded the Queen, "for I hear them."

"Monsieur Laporte," said D'Artagnan, "go and meet them, and again enjoin silence. Madame, wait there, at the door; I shall stand by the King's bedside, ready to die for him."

Laporte left the room, the Queen stood near the tapestry, and D'Artagnan glided behind the curtains.

Then the dull and continued tread of a vast multitude of men was heard. The Queen herself raised the tapestry, placing her finger on her lips.

On seeing the Queen, these men stopped, in an attitude of respect.

"Enter, gentlemen," said the Queen.

There was then a moment of hesitation amongst all this people, which resembled shame. They had expected resistance, had expected to be opposed, to force the gates and overthrow the Guards; but the gates had opened of themselves, and the King, ostensibly at least, had no other guard at his pillow than his mother.

Those who were in front stammered and drew back.

"Enter, gentlemen," said Laporte, "since the Queen permits it."

One more hardy than the others then ventured to pass the threshold, and advanced noiselessly. The others followed his example, and the room was silently filled, just as if these men had been the humblest and most devoted courtiers. Far beyond the door were seen the heads of those who, not being able to enter, were raising themselves on tiptoe. D'Artagnan saw all this through an opening he had made in the curtains, and in the man who first entered he recognized Planchet.

"Sir," said the Queen, who understood that he was the leader of the band, "you have desired to see the King, and I wished to show him to you myself. Go up and look at him, and say if we have the appearance of people who wish to escape."

"Certainly not," replied Planchet, greatly astonished by the unexpected honour that he had received.

"You will therefore tell my good and faithful Parisians," continued Anne of Austria, with a smile the expression of which D'Artagnan could not misinterpret, "that you have seen the King in bed and asleep; as also the Queen, likewise ready to go to bed."

"I will tell them, madame; and those who accompany me will say the same thing. But" —

"But what?" demanded Anne of Austria.

"Will your Majesty pardon me," said Planchet, "but is it really the King who is lying in this bed?"

Anne of Austria started.

"If there be any one of you who knows the King," said she, "let him approach and declare whether it be really the King who is there or not."

A man, wrapped in a cloak, with which he concealed his face, went up, leaned over the bed, and looked at the King.

For an instant D'Artagnan thought that this man had some evil design, and he put his hand to his sword; but by the motion that the man with the mantle made in stooping he disclosed a part of his countenance, and D'Artagnan recognised the coadjutor.

"It is really the King," said the man, raising himself up. "May God bless his Majesty!"

"Yes!" responded the leader, in a subdued voice, — "yes, may God bless his Majesty!"

And all these men, who had entered furious, now passing from anger to piety, in turn blessed the royal child.

"Now, my friends," said Planchet, "let us thank the Queen and depart."

All bowed low and gradually left the room, noiseless as they had entered it. Planchet, who had come in first, went out last.

The Queen stopped him. "What is your name, my friend?" said she.

Planchet turned, much astonished by the question.

"Yes," said the Queen, "I consider myself as much honoured in having received you as if you had been a prince, and I wish to know your name."

"Yes," thought Planchet, "to treat me like a prince. Thank you!"

D'Artagnan trembled lest Planchet, seduced like the crow in the fable, should tell his name, and that the Queen, knowing his name, should also learn that he had formerly belonged to him.

"Madame," replied Planchet most respectfully, "my name is Dulaurier, at your service."

"Thank you, Monsieur Dulaurier," said the Queen. "And what is your profession?"

"I am a draper, madame, in the Rue des Bourdonnais."

"That is all I want to know," said the Queen. "I am e: tremely obliged to you, my dear Monsieur Dulaurier; you wi hear from me again."

"Come, come," muttered D'Artagnan, issuing from behin the curtains, "positively Master Planchet is no fool, and it i plain enough that he has been brought up in a good school."

The different actors in this strange scene remained an i stant facing each other without saying one word — the Quee standing near the door, D'Artagnan half withdrawn from h concealment, the King resting on his elbow, and ready to fa back on the bed at the least noise that might indicate th return of the multitude. But, instead of approaching, th noise gradually faded away until it entirely ceased.

The Queen drew a long breath; D'Artagnan wiped his moi brow; the King let himself slip from the bed, saying:

"Let us set off."

At this moment Laporte returned.

"Well?" cried the Queen.

"Well, madame, I followed them even to the gates; the proclaimed to all their comrades that they had seen the King and that the Queen had spoken to them, so that they are gon off quite proud and boastful."

"Oh, the wretches!" murmured the Queen; "they shall pa for their audacity, I promise them."

Then, turning to D'Artagnan:

"Sir," said she, "you have this night given me the bes advice that I ever received in my life. Continue to do so What ought we to do now?"

"Monsieur Laporte," said D'Artagnan, "finish dressing th King."

"Can we start now?" asked the Queen.

"Whenever your Majesty pleases; you have only to descend the private staircase; you will find me at the door."

"Go, sir," said the Queen; "I will follow you."

D'Artagnan went downstairs. The carriage was at its post with the Musketeer on the box.

D'Artagnan took the bundle that he had desired Bernouin t lay at the Musketeer's feet; it may be remembered that it contained the hat and cloak of M. de Gondy's coachman.

D'Artagnan put the cloak on his shoulders and the hat on *his head.*

The Musketeer got off the box.

"Sir," said D'Artagnan, "you will go and liberate your companion, who is on guard over the coachman; you will then both mount your horses and go to the Hôtel de la Chevrette, in the Rue Tiquetonne, get my horse and M. du Vallon's, which you will saddle and bridle for service. You will then leave Paris, leading these horses, and will go to the Cours-la-Reine. Should you find no one at the Cours-la-Reine, you will proceed to Saint Germain. The King's service!"

The Musketeer put his hand to his hat, and went off to execute the orders he had received.

D'Artagnan mounted the box.

He had a pair of pistols at his girdle, a musketoon at his feet, and his naked sword behind him.

The Queen appeared. Behind her came the King and the Duc d'Anjou, his brother.

"The coadjutor's carriage!" exclaimed the Queen, starting back.

"Yes, madame," said D'Artagnan; "but enter it boldly, for I am going to drive."

The Queen uttered an exclamation of surprise, and got into the carriage; the King and Monsieur followed her, and seated themselves by her side.

"Come in, Laporte," said the Queen.

"What, madame!" said the *valet-de-chambre,* "in the same carriage with your Majesties?"

"We must not this evening think about royal etiquette, but about the King's safety. Come in, Laporte."

Laporte obeyed.

"Close the hoods," said D'Artagnan.

"But will not that excite suspicion, sir?" demanded the Queen.

"Let her Majesty make herself perfectly easy; I have my answer prepared."

They closed the hoods, and went off at a gallop down the Rue de Richelieu. On reaching the gate the leader of the post came up, at the head of a dozen men and holding a lantern in his hand.

D'Artagnan made him a sign to approach. "Do you not know this carriage?" said he to the sergeant.

"No," he answered.

"Look at the arms."

The sergeant held the lantern to the panel. "They are the coadjutor's arms," said he.

"Hush! It 's a love affair between him and Madame de Guémenée."

The sergeant began to laugh.

"Open the gate," said he; "I know what that is."

Then going close to the lowered hoods: "A pleasant evening, monseigneur," said he.

"Oh, you indiscreet fellow!" cried D'Artagnan; "you will get me turned off."

The gate creaked on its hinges, and D'Artagnan, seeing the road clear, applied the whip vigorously, and the horses set off at a round trot.

In five minutes they had overtaken the Cardinal's coach.

"Mousqueton," cried D'Artagnan, "raise the hood of her Majesty's coach."

"It is he himself!" said Porthos.

"As coachman!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"And with the coadjutor's coach!" said the Queen.

"*Corpo di Dio!* Monsou d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you are worth your weight in gold."

CHAPTER LV.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN GAINED TWO HUNDRED AND NINETEEN, AND PORTHOS TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN, LOUIS BY SELLING STRAW.

MAZARIN wished to set off at once for Saint Germain, but the Queen declared that she would wait for the persons whom she had appointed to meet her. She offered Laporte's place to the Cardinal, who accepted the offer and changed coaches.

There was good and sufficient reason for the report spreading that the King would leave Paris in the night. By six o'clock in the evening ten or a dozen persons had been admitted into the secret of this departure, and, however discreet they might be individually, they could not give the orders for their own departure without the thing in some measure transpiring. Besides, these persons each had one or two others in whom they were interested; and as there was no doubt that the

Queen was leaving Paris with terrible projects of revenge, every one had warned his friends or relations, so that the rumour of the departure had run like a train of gunpowder through all the streets of the City.

The first coach to arrive after the Queen's was Monsieur le Prince's; it contained M. de Condé, the Princess, and the Princess-Dowager. All of them had been aroused in the middle of the night, and knew not what was going on.

The second contained the Duc d'Orléans, the Duchesse, la Grande Mademoiselle, and the Abbé de la Rivière, the Prince's intimate friend and inseparable counsellor.

The third contained M. de Longueville and the Prince de Conti, M. le Prince's brother and brother-in-law. They got out and went up to the coach of the King and the Queen, to offer their homage to their Majesties.

The Queen threw a searching glance into their carriage, the door of which had been left open, and saw that it was empty.

"But where, pray, is Madame de Longueville?" she asked.

"In fact, where is my sister?" asked M. le Prince.

"Madame de Longueville is ill, madame," replied the Duke, "and she charged me to make her apologies to your Majesty."

Anne glanced quickly at the Cardinal, who replied with an imperceptible nod. "What do you say to that?" asked the Queen.

"I say that it is a hostage for the Parisians," replied the Cardinal.

"Why did she not come?" asked the Prince, in a low voice, of his brother.

"Silence!" he replied; "she doubtless had her own reason."

"She is destroying us," murmured the Prince.

"She will save us," replied Conti.

The coaches were arriving in crowds. The Maréchal de la Meilleraie, the Maréchal Villeroy, Guitaut, Comminges, Villequier, came one behind the other. The two Musketeers came, in their turn, with the horses for D'Artagnan and Porthos, who mounted. Porthos's coachman took D'Artagnan's place on the box of the royal coach, and Mousqueton took the coachman's place, driving standing up, for reasons best known to himself, and looking like Automedon of old.

The Queen, though occupied by a thousand details, looked for D'Artagnan; but the Gascon, with his usual prudence, had already buried himself in the crowd.

"Let us be the vanguard," said he to Porthos, "and get good lodgings at Saint Germain, for no one will bother about us. I feel much fatigued."

"I am actually staggering with drowsiness," said Porthos. "To think that we have not had the least fighting. Positively, the Parisians are sad blockheads!"

"Is it not, rather, that we are very clever?" said D'Artagnan.

"Perhaps so."

"And how is your fist?"

"Better. But do you think that we have got it this time?"

"What?"

"You your rank, and I my title."

"Faith, yes; I would almost wager it. Besides, if they do not remember it, I will make them remember it."

"I hear the Queen's voice," said Porthos; "I believe she wants to get on horseback."

"Oh! she may wish it; but"—

"But what?"

"The Cardinal does not. Gentlemen," continued D'Artagnan, addressing the two Musketeers, "accompany the Queen's carriage, and do not leave the doors. We go on to prepare lodgings."

And D'Artagnan spurred off toward St. Germain, accompanied by Porthos.

"Now let us start, gentlemen," said the Queen.

And the royal coach moved on, followed by all the other coaches and more than fifty horsemen.

They reached St. Germain without accident. As the Queen stepped down from the carriage she found M. le Prince, who was standing, uncovered, to give her his hand.

"What an awakening for the Parisians!" said Anne of Austria, radiant with joy.

"It is war," said the Prince.

"Well, let it be war! Have we not the conqueror of Rocroy, of Nordlingen, and of Lens with us?"

The Prince bowed gratefully.

It was three o'clock in the morning. The Queen was the first to enter the château, and the rest followed her. About two hundred persons had accompanied her flight.

"Gentlemen," said the Queen, laughing, "you will lodge in *the château*; it is large and you will not want room; but, as we

were not expected, I am informed that there are only three beds — one for the King, one for myself" —

"And one for Mazarin," said the Prince, in a low voice.

"And am I to sleep on the floor?" exclaimed Gaston d'Orléans, with a troubled smile.

"No, monseigneur," said Mazarin, "for the third bed is destined for your highness."

"But you?" asked the Prince.

"Oh, I shall not go to bed at all; I have work to do," replied Mazarin.

Gaston departed for the chamber where this bed was, without disturbing himself in the least as to where and how his wife and daughter were to be lodged.

"Well, now I am going to bed," said D'Artagnan. "Come with me, Porthos."

Porthos followed his friend. He had implicit confidence in D'Artagnan's intellect.

They walked side by side along the square in front of the château, Porthos gazing with open eyes at D'Artagnan, who was making a calculation on his fingers.

"Four hundred, at a pistole each, make four hundred pistoles."

"Yes," said Porthos, "four hundred pistoles. But what have we to do with four hundred pistoles?"

"A pistole is not enough," continued D'Artagnan; "it is worth a louis."

"What is worth a louis?"

"Four hundred, at one louis, make four hundred louis."

"Four hundred?" said Porthos.

"Yes; there are two hundred, and they will want at least two for each person. At two for each, that makes four hundred."

"But four hundred what?"

"Listen!" said D'Artagnan.

And then, as there were all sorts of persons who were watching with astonishment the arrival of the Court, he finished his sentence in a whisper into Porthos's ear.

"I understand," said Porthos, "I understand wonderfully well, by my faith! Two hundred louis each! What a glorious thing! But what will they say of us?"

"Let them say what they like. Besides, how will they know that we are doing it?"

"But who will take charge of the distribution?"

"Is not Mousqueton there?"

"And my livery?" said Porthos; "they will recognise my livery."

"Let him turn his coat."

"You are always right, my dear," exclaimed Porthos. "But where the devil do you get all the ideas that you have?"

D'Artagnan smiled.

The two friends went down the first street they came to. Porthos knocked at the door of the house on the right, while D'Artagnan knocked at that on the left.

"We want some straw," said they.

"We have none, sir," replied the people who opened the doors; "but apply to the forage dealer."

"And where does he live?"

"The last great gate in the street."

"On the right or left?"

"On the left."

"And are there any other persons in Saint Germain from whom it can be procured?"

"There is the landlord of the *Mouton-couronné*, and Fat Louis the farmer."

"Where do they live?"

"In the Rue des Ursulines."

"Both of them?"

"Yes."

"Very good."

The two friends having had the latter places pointed out to them as exactly as the first, D'Artagnan first went to the forage dealer's house and bought from him a hundred and fifty bundles of straw for three pistoles. He then went to the innkeeper, where he found Porthos, who had just purchased two hundred bundles for about the same sum; and lastly, Louis the farmer sold them a hundred and eighty — in all, four hundred and thirty bundles.

That was all there was at Saint Germain.

All this clearance occupied them only half an hour; and Mousqueton, duly instructed, was placed at the head of this impromptu commerce. They charged him not to let a single straw leave his hands at less than a louis a bundle, and made him responsible for four hundred and thirty louis.

Mousqueton shook his head; he did not at all comprehend the *speculation* of the two friends.

D'Artagnan, carrying three bundles of straw, returned to the âteau, where every one, shivering with cold and overpowered th sleep, was envying the King, the Queen, and Monsieur, on eir camp beds.

D'Artagnan's entrance into the great salon produced an uni-rsal burst of laughter. But he pretended not even to per-ve that he was the object of general observation, and began arrange his bed of straw with so much skill, address, and yety that all these poor sleepy mortals, who had no means of eping, began to feel their mouths water.

"Straw!" they cried, "straw! Where can one find straw?"

"I will show you," said Porthos.

And he conducted those who wanted it to Mousqueton, who nerously distributed the bundles at a louis apiece. They ought it rather dear, but when one is very sleepy, who is ere that would not pay two or three louis for some hours' od sleep?

D'Artagnan gave up his bed to every one who requested him, that he began ten fresh ones; and as he was supposed to ve paid, like the others, a louis for each bundle, he thus cketed about thirty louis in less than half an hour. By five the morning the straw was worth four louis a bundle, and more was to be had.

D'Artagnan had taken care to put aside four bundles for mself. Having secured the key of the closet where he had ncealed them, he went, accompanied by Porthos, to settle th Mousqueton, who, with great simplicity, and like a good eward as he was, delivered four hundred and thirty louis to m, and yet retained one hundred for himself.

Mousqueton, who knew nothing of what had taken place at e château, could not imagine how the idea of selling straw d not occurred to him sooner.

D'Artagnan put the gold into his hat, and as they returned ttled his accounts with Porthos. They each received two ndred and fifteen louis.

Porthos then first recollected that he had no straw for him-lf. So he went back to Mousqueton, but Mousqueton had ld even to the last straw, keeping nothing for himself.

He then returned to find D'Artagnan, who, thanks to his ur bundles of straw, was just manufacturing, and enjoying anticipation, a bed so soft, so well heaped up at the head d so well covered at the feet, that it would have excited the

envy of the King himself, if the King had not slept so well in his own.

D'Artagnan would not derange his bed for Porthos at any price; but in consideration of four louis, which he counted him down, he agreed that Porthos should sleep with him.

He laid his sword at his head and his pistols by his side, spread his cloak over his feet, placed his hat on his cloak, and stretched himself voluptuously on the straw, which crackled under him. He was already beginning to court those soft dreams which the possession of two hundred louis, gained in a quarter of an hour, naturally engender, when a voice resounded at the door of the salon and made him start up.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" it cried, "Monsieur d'Artagnan!"

"Here!" said Porthos, "here!"

Porthos comprehended that if D'Artagnan went away, he should have the bed to himself.

An officer approached.

D'Artagnan raised himself on his elbow.

"Are you Monsieur d'Artagnan?" said the officer.

"Yes, sir; what do you want with me?"

"I am come in search of you."

"From whom?"

"From his Eminence."

"Tell monsignor that I am going to sleep, and recommend him to do the same."

"His Eminence is not in bed, nor does he intend to go to bed, and he wants you immediately."

"The plague take Mazarin, who does not know how to sleep at proper times and seasons!" he muttered. "What can he want with me? Is it to make me a captain? In that case I pardon him."

And the Musketeer got up, grumbling, took his sword, his pistols, his hat, and his cloak, and followed the officer; while Porthos, remaining the sole and undivided possessor of the bed, endeavoured to imitate the beautiful arrangements of his friend.

"Monsou d'Artagnan," said the Cardinal, on seeing him for whom he had sent so inopportunely, "I have not forgotten the zeal with which you have served me, and I am going to give you a proof of it."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan; "this begins well."

Mazarin looked at the Musketeer and saw his countenance *grow radiant.*

"Ah! monsignor."

"Monsieur D'Artagnan, are you really desirous of becoming a captain?"

"Yes, monsignor."

"And does your friend still desire to be a baron?"

"Monsignor, he is at this very moment dreaming that he is one."

"Then," said Mazarin, drawing from his portfolio the letter that he had before shown to D'Artagnan, "take this despatch and carry it to England."

D'Artagnan looked at the letter; it had no address.

"Am I not to know to whom I am to deliver it?"

"On reaching London you will know; at London only you will tear the outer envelope."

"And what are my instructions?"

"To obey in every particular the person to whom this letter is addressed."

D'Artagnan was going to ask further questions, when Mazarin added:

"You will go to Boulogne, where you will find, at the Armes d'Angleterre, a young gentleman named Mordaunt."

"Yes, monsignor; and what am I to do with this gentleman?"

"You must follow him wherever he may lead you."

D'Artagnan looked at the Cardinal with an air of great astonishment.

"Now you have received your orders," said Mazarin, "go."

"It is easy enough to say Go," replied D'Artagnan; "but to go money is wanted, and I have none."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, scratching his ear, "you say that you have no money?"

"No, monsignor."

"But that diamond which I gave you yesterday evening."

"I wish to keep it in memory of your Eminence."

Mazarin sighed.

"Living is dear in England, monsignor, and more especially for one who is sent on an extraordinary mission."

"Hein!" said Mazarin, "it is a very sober country, and they live very simply since the Revolution. But never mind."

He opened a drawer and took out a purse.

"What do you say to these thousand crowns?"

D'Artagnan thrust out his lower lip to an unconscionable length.

"I say, monsignor, that it is very little, for I certainly not go alone."

"I know that well enough," replied Mazarin; "M. du V will accompany you, the worthy gentleman; for after my dear Monsou D'Artagnan, he is certainly the man in F whom I love and esteem the most."

"Then, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, pointing to the of which Mazarin still retained possession, — "then i love and esteem him so much, you understand" —

"So be it! On his account I will add two hundred cro

"The niggard!" muttered D'Artagnan. "But on o turn," he added aloud, "we may at least expect, may w M. Porthos his barony, and I my promotion?"

"On the faith of Mazarin."

"I should much prefer any other oath," said D'Artagn a low voice. Then, aloud, "May I not present my respe the Queen?"

"Her Majesty is asleep," replied Mazarin, with great ness, "and you must set off without delay. Go, therefore

"One word more, monsignor. Should there be any fig where I am going, shall I fight?"

"You will do whatever the person to whom that let addressed may command you."

"Very well, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, extendin hand to receive the bag; "and I offer you my respects."

D'Artagnan dropped the bag gently into his large p Then, turning to the officer, "Sir," said he, "would you kind as to go and wake M. du Vallon by the command Eminence, and tell him that I am waiting for him a stables?"

The officer went off immediately, and with so much ness that he appeared to D'Artagnan to have some inte motive in it.

Porthos had just settled himself on his bed, and, acc to his usual custom, was beginning to snore harmoni when he felt some one slap him on the shoulder.

He thought that it was D'Artagnan, and did not stir.

"From the Cardinal," said the officer.

"Hein!" said Porthos, opening his eyes wide; "wh you say?"

"I say that his Eminence is sending you to Englan that M. d'Artagnan is waiting for you at the stables."

Porthos heaved a deep sigh, arose, took his sword, his stols, his hat, and his cloak, and went out, casting a lingering ok of regret at the bed on which he had promised himself ch a sweet sleep.

Scarcely had he turned his back before the officer was in- alled in his place; and he had not got beyond the threshold the door before his successor was snoring vigorously. It as quite natural; he was the only one in all that assemblage, cept the King, the Queen, and Gaston d'Orléans, who slept atis.

CHAPTER LVI.

NEWS FROM ARAMIS.

D'Artagnan had gone straight to the stables. The day as just dawning. He found his horse and Porthos's fast- ed to a rack, but it was an empty rack. Pitying the poor imals, he went to a corner of the stable, where he saw the itter of a small quantity of straw, which had doubtless caped the night's raid; but in collecting this straw together ith his foot the end of his boot encountered a round body, hich, happening to be touched in a tender part, uttered a cry d rose up on its knees, rubbing its eyes. It was Mousqueton, o, having no straw for himself, had made free with that of e horses.

"Mousqueton!" said D'Artagnan; "come, come; we must off!"

Mousqueton, on recognising the voice of his master's friend, se up hastily, and, in rising, let fall some of those louis he d gained so illegally that night.

"Oho!" said D'Artagnan, picking up one of them and put- ng it to his nose, "here is some gold that has a very singular our; it smells of straw."

Mousqueton blushed so ingenuously, and appeared so much barrassed, that the Gascon began to laugh, and said to him: "Porthos would be angry, my dear Monsieur Mouston, but I rdon you. Only let us remember that this money ought serve as a cure for our wound, and let us be gay. Come ng!"

Mousqueton instantly assumed a most hilarious look, saddled

his master's horse with great activity, and mounted his own without making any grimace.

While this was doing Porthos arrived with a very dissatisfied look, and was to the last degree astonished to find D'Artagnan resigned and Mousqueton almost joyful.

"Ah!" said he, "we have them, have we, you your promotion, and I my barony?"

"We are going to look for the commissions," said D'Artagnan, "and on our return Master Mazarini will sign them."

"And where are we going?" demanded Porthos.

"To Paris first," replied D'Artagnan; "I want to settle some business there."

"Let us go to Paris, then," said Porthos.

And accordingly they set off together for Paris.

On reaching the gates they were quite astonished at seeing the threatening aspect of the capital. Around an overturned and shattered carriage the people were uttering imprecations, while the occupants of the vehicle, an old man and two women, who had tried to escape, were prisoners.

But when, on the contrary, D'Artagnan and Porthos asked permission to enter, they were received with every kind of caresses. They were taken for deserters from the royal party, and the people wished to attach them to their own.

"What is the King doing?" they were asked.

"He is asleep."

"And the Spanish woman?"

"She is dreaming."

"And the cursed Italian?"

"He is awake; therefore remain firm; for as they went away, it was for some purpose. But after all, as you are the strongest party, do not attack women and old men: take up with real emergencies."

The people heard these words with favour, and released the ladies, who thanked D'Artagnan by an eloquent look.

"Now, forward!" said D'Artagnan.

And they continued their journey, passing through barricades, stepping over chains, pushed, questioned, and asking questions in turn.

At the Place du Palais Royal D'Artagnan saw a sergeant, who was drilling five or six hundred citizens; it was Planchet, who was putting into practice, for the benefit of the urban *militia, the* knowledge he had gained in the regiment of Pied-

mont. As he passed before D'Artagnan he recognised his old master.

"Good morning, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Planchet, with a proud look.

"Good morning, Monsieur Dulaurier," replied D'Artagnan.

Planchet stopped short, looking at D'Artagnan with astonished eyes. The first rank, seeing their leader stop, stopped also; the other ranks did the same, from the first to the last.

"These citizens are horribly ridiculous," said D'Artagnan to Porthos.

And he moved on again.

In five minutes more they were at the Hôtel de la Chevrette. The fair Madeline rushed out to meet D'Artagnan.

"My dear Madame Turquaine," said D'Artagnan, "if you have any money, hide it quick; if you have any jewels, conceal them; if you have any debtors, make them pay you; if you have any creditors, do not pay them!"

"Why?" asked Madeline.

"Because Paris is going to be reduced to ashes, just as Babylon was, as you have doubtless heard."

"And you leave me at such a time?"

"This very instant," replied D'Artagnan.

"And where are you going?"

"If you could tell me you would render me a positive service."

"Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

"Have you any letters for me?" demanded D'Artagnan, making a sign to his hostess that she might spare her lamentations, since lamentations were superfluous.

"There is one, just come."

And she gave the letter to D'Artagnan.

"From Athos!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, who knew their friend's firm, bold handwriting.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "let us see what he says."

D'Artagnan opened the letter and read:

"*Dear D'Artagnan, dear Du Vallon:*

"*My good friends, perhaps you now hear from me for the last time. Aramis and I are very unhappy; but God, our own courage, and the recollection of your friendship sustain us. Think of Raoul. I remind you of the papers that are at Blois; and if in two months and a half you hear nothing of*

[illegible] D'Artagnan [illegible]

"[illegible] M. Mordaunt whom we are [illegible] and with whom we are going to Eng[illegible]

"Well, but if, instead of going to meet this M. Mo[illegible] we were to go and join our friends?" said Porthos, w[illegible] gesture sufficient to daunt an army.

"I have thought of that," said D'Artagnan: "but this l[illegible] has neither date nor stamp."

hat is true," said Porthos.
l he began to pace up and down the room like a mad-
gesticulating, and every moment drawing his sword half-
ut of its scabbard.
Artagnan remained standing like a man in consternation,
the most profound affliction painted on his countenance.
h! 't is bad," said he. "Athos insults us: he wishes
without us. 'T is bad!"
usqueton, seeing their great despondency, was melted to
in his corner.
ome, come," said D'Artagnan, "all this leads to nothing.
s go and embrace Raoul, as we said; and perhaps he may
heard some news from Athos."
pity him who should look black at my master at this
nt," said Mousqueton; "I would not give him a sou for
in."
ey mounted their horses and set off. On reaching the
Saint Denis, the friends found a vast concourse of people
bled. M. de Beaufort had just arrived from the Ven-
is, and the coadjutor was showing him to the joyous and
ised Parisians.
th M. de Beaufort they considered themselves as hence-
invincible.
e two friends went down a small street to avoid meeting
uke, and reached the barrier of St. Denis.
s it true," asked the Guards of the two cavaliers, "that
Beaufort has reached Paris?"
Nothing can be more true," replied D'Artagnan, "and the
of it is, that he has sent us forward to meet his father,
Vendôme, who is also coming up."
Vive M. de Beaufort!" cried the Guards.
d they made way respectfully to allow the messengers of
reat Prince to pass.
ce past the barrier and the road was actually devoured
ese men, who were incapable of fatigue or discourage-
Their horses flew, and they never ceased talking of
s and Aramis.
usqueton suffered all torments imaginable; but the ex-
t servant consoled himself with the reflection that his
asters were experiencing other and greater sufferings; for
d come to consider D'Artagnan as his second master, and
d him even more *promptly* and implicitly than Porthos.

The camp was between Saint Omer and Lambe. The two friends made a détour to the camp, and announced to the army the news of the flight of the King and Queen, of which, as yet, they had only heard vague rumours. They found Raoul near his tent, lying on a bundle of fodder, from which his horse was furtively stealing an occasional mouthful. The young man's eyes were red, and he appeared much depressed. The Maréchal de Grammont and the Comte de Guiche were at Paris, and the poor youth found himself very lonely.

In a moment Raoul raised his eyes, and saw the two cavaliers looking at him; he recognised them, and ran to them with open arms.

"Oh! it is you, my dear friends!" he exclaimed; "are you come for me? Will you take me with you? Do you bring me any news of my guardian?"

"Have you not then received any yourself?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Alas! no, sir; and I really cannot think what has become of him. I am, therefore, so anxious as to be quite unhappy."

And two large tears rolled down the youth's bronzed cheeks.

Porthos turned away his head, that what was passing in his heart might not be betrayed in his honest face.

"What the devil!" said D'Artagnan, more affected than he had been for a long time; "do not despond, my friend; if you have not received any letters from the Count, we have one."

"Oh, really!" cried Raoul.

"And a very satisfactory one, too," said D'Artagnan, seeing the delight that this news gave the young man.

"Have you brought it with you?" inquired Raoul.

"Yes — that is to say, I had it," replied D'Artagnan, pretending to search for it; "wait now — it ought to be here in my pocket; he speaks about his return — does he not, Porthos?"

Thoroughly Gascon as he was, D'Artagnan did not wish to take the whole burden of this lie on his own shoulders.

"Yes," said Porthos, coughing.

"Oh, give it to me!" cried the young man.

"Eh! And I read it so very lately, too! Can I have lost it? Oh, *pécaïre!* There is a hole in my pocket."

"Oh, yes, M. Raoul," said Mousqueton, "and the letter was so satisfactory! These gentlemen read it to me, and I quite *wept for joy*."

"But at least, M. d'Artagnan, you know where he is?" sked Raoul, partly restored to serenity.

"Oh, yes, certainly I know that," said D'Artagnan; "but t is a secret."

"Not to me, I hope?"

"No, not to you; so I am going to tell you where he is."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan with his eyes wide open in stonishment.

"Where the devil shall I say that he is, so that he may not ttempt to go and join him?" muttered D'Artagnan.

"Well, now, where is he, sir?" said Raoul, in his soft and oaxing voice.

"He is in Constantinople!"

"Among the Turks!" cried Raoul, quite frightened; "good God! what are you telling me?"

"What, does this frighten you?" said D'Artagnan. "Bah! what are the Turks to such men as the Comte de la Fère and the Abbé d'Herblay?"

"Ah! his friend is with him?" said Raoul. "That reassures me a little."

"Has he not talent, then, that demon of a D'Artagnan?" said Porthos to himself, amazed by his friend's subtilty.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, anxious to change the conversation, "here are fifty pistoles which the Count sent by the same courier. I presume that you have not too much money, and that they are welcome."

"I still have twenty pistoles, sir."

"Very well; take these just the same; that will make seventy."

"And if you want any more," said Porthos, putting his hand to his fob.

"No, I thank you," said Raoul, colouring, — "thank you a thousand times, sir."

At this moment Olivain made his appearance.

"By the way," said D'Artagnan, in such a manner that the lacquey might hear it, "are you satisfied with Olivain?"

"Yes, pretty well for that."

Olivain pretended not to have heard, and entered the tent.

"And what fault do you find with the rascal?"

"He is a glutton," answered Raoul.

"Oh, sir!" said Olivain, coming forward at this accusation "He is a bit of a thief."

"Oh! sir, oh!"

"And, above all, he is a desperate coward."

"Oh! oh! oh! sir, you dishonour me!" said Olivain.

"Peste!" cried D'Artagnan; "understand, Master Ol that persons of our stamp do not allow ourselves to be ser cowards. Rob your master, eat his sweetmeats and pre and drink his wine; but, *cap de dieu*, be not a poltroo will cut off your ears. Look at M. Mouston there; as to show you the honourable wounds he has received observe what a dignity his habitual bravery has imp upon his countenance."

Mousqueton was in the third heaven, and would ha braced D'Artagnan had he dared. In the meantime he mined, in his own mind, to get himself killed for him first opportunity.

"Dismiss this rascal, Raoul," said D'Artagnan; "fo be a coward, he will some day dishonour you."

"M. Raoul says that I am a coward," exclaimed O "because, the other day, he wished to fight a cor the regiment of Grammont, and I refused to acco him."

"Master Olivain, a lacquey should always be obe said D'Artagnan, with great severity.

And then, taking him aside, he said:

"You did well if your master was wrong, and he crown for you; but if he is ever insulted and you do yourself be cut in pieces for him, I will cut out your and wipe your face with it. Remember!"

Olivain bowed and put the crown into his pocket.

"And now, friend Raoul," said D'Artagnan, "M. du and myself are going as ambassadors. I cannot tell y what object; I do not even know myself; but if you want anything, write to Madelon Turquaine, Hôtel Chevrette, Rue Tiquetonne, and draw upon that fund a banker's — with discretion, however, for I warn you th not so well garnished as M. d'Emery's."

And having embraced his temporary ward, he turne over to the vigorous arms of Porthos, who raised him fr earth and held him for a moment suspended again noble heart, redoubtable giant that he was!

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "we must be off."

And they resumed their journey toward Boulogne,

ıey reached toward evening, their horses bathed in sweat ıd white with foam.

Ten paces from the spot where they paused before entering ıe town stood a young man dressed in black, who seemed) be waiting for some one, and who, from the moment ıat he had seen them, had not once taken his eyes from ıem.

D'Artagnan went near him, and perceiving that he was still ızing at him:

"Hé, my friend," said he, "I do not like to be stared at."

"Sir," said the young man, seeming not to notice D'Artaıan's construction of his conduct, "pray, are you not come ·om Paris?"

D'Artagnan thought that it was some inquisitive person ho wished to learn the news from the capital.

"Yes, sir," he replied, in a milder tone.

"Are you not to lodge at the Armes d'Angleterre?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you not intrusted with a mission from his Eminence ardinal de Mazarin?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case," said the young man, "I am the man whom ɔu want — I am M. Mordaunt."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "the man whom thos bade me distrust."

"Ah!" murmured Porthos, "the man whom Aramis wants e to choke."

Both of them looked earnestly at the young man, who, misking the expression of their eyes, said:

"Do you doubt my word? In that case, I am ready to ve you every proof."

"No, sir," replied D'Artagnan, "and we place ourselves ıder your directions."

"Well, then, gentlemen, we will start without delay; for ıis is the last day that the Cardinal appointed me to wait. y vessel is ready; and if you had not come, I should have ft without you, for General Oliver Cromwell must be imıtiently expecting my return."

"Aha!" said D'Artagnan, "we are sent to General Cromell?"

"Have you not a letter for him?" asked the young man.

"I have a letter with a double envelope, which I was not

to remove till I should reach London; but since you tell me to whom it is addressed, it is useless to wait till then."

D'Artagnan tore open the cover.

It was, in fact, addressed:

"*To M. Oliver Cromwell, general of the troops of the English nation.*"

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "a singular commission."

"Who is this Oliver Cromwell?" asked Porthos, in a low voice.

"A former brewer," replied D'Artagnan.

"And can Mazarin be wanting to speculate in beer, as w did in straw?" asked Porthos.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said Mordaunt impatiently, "le us start."

"What!" cried Porthos, "without our supper? Canno this M. Cromwell wait a little?"

"Yes, but I" — said Mordaunt.

"Well, and you," said Porthos; "what then?"

"I am in a hurry."

"Oh, if it is for you," said Porthos, "that is nothing to me and I will sup, either with your permission or without you permission."

The young man's expressionless eyes lighted up, and a peared about to emit a flash; but he restrained himself.

"Sir," continued D'Artagnan, "you must make allowan for two famished travellers. Besides, our supper will n delay you long. We will spur on to the hotel. You go o foot to the port, and we will eat a morsel and be there as soo as you are."

"Just as you please, gentlemen, provided we depart," sa Mordaunt.

"This is a lucky thing," murmured Porthos.

"The name of the vessel?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"The 'Standard.'"

"Very good. We 'll be on board in half an hour."

And giving their spurs to their horses, they hastened to th hotel.

"What do you say about this young man?" asked D'Art gnan, as they galloped along.

"I say that he does not suit me at all," replied Porthos "and that I felt a strong inclination to follow Aramis *advice.*"

"Take good care that you do not, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "he is an envoy of General Cromwell's, and we should be but poorly received, I fancy, if he were told that we had twisted the neck of his confidant."

"Nevertheless," said Porthos, "I have always noticed that Aramis gives excellent advice."

"Listen," said D'Artagnan. "When our embassy is finished" —

"Well?"

"If he should conduct us back to France" —

"Well, what then?"

"Why — then — we shall see."

The two friends reached the hotel, where they made an excellent supper; then they hastened down to the harbour. A brig was ready to set sail, and they saw Mordaunt walking up and down its deck with impatience.

"It is incredible," said D'Artagnan, whilst the boat was taking them on board the "Standard," "it is astonishing how much this young man resembles some one I have known, but I cannot tell who it is."

They reached the ladder, and the next minute they were on board.

But the embarkation of the horses occupied more time, and the brig could not weigh anchor before eight o'clock in the evening.

The young man stamped with impatience, and ordered that every inch of canvas should be spread.

Porthos, almost worn out by three sleepless nights and a journey of seventy leagues on horseback, had retired to the cabin, and was asleep.

D'Artagnan, overcoming his repugnance to Mordaunt, walked up and down the deck with him, and related a thousand anecdotes to make him speak.

Mousqueton was seasick.

CHAPTER LVII.

"THE FAITHLESS, PERJURED SCOTSMAN SOLD HIS MONARCH FOR A BIT OF GOLD."

And now our readers must leave the "Standard" to smoothly on, not Londonward, as Porthos and D'Arta supposed, but to Durham, where letters from Englan ceived while he was tarrying at Boulogne, had comma Mordaunt to proceed; and must follow us to the royal c on this side of the Tyne, near the town of Newcastle.

There, between two rivers, on the frontiers of Scotlan on English soil, are pitched the tents of a small army is midnight. Some men, who by their bare legs and kilts, their chequered plaids and the feather adorning bonnets, are seen to be Highlanders, are keeping a ca watch. The moon, gliding behind two big clouds, whe it shines out lights up the muskets of the sentinels strongly defines the walls, roofs, and steeples of the which Charles I. (in hope of an accommodation) had surrendered to the Parliamentary troops, as he had al done Oxford and Newark, which held out for him.

At one end of the camp, near an immense tent in w the Scottish officers are holding a sort of council pre over by the old Earl of Leven, their chief, a man, dress a cavalier, is asleep on the grass, with his right hand re on his sword.

About fifty paces distant another man, dressed also cavalier, is talking with a Scottish sentinel; and, thar the knowledge he seems to have acquired of the Englis guage, although a foreigner he manages to understan Perthshire dialect of the sentinel whom he is questio

Just as it was striking one o'clock in the town of castle, the sleeper awoke; and after making all the ce tions that a man generally does when waking from a pro sleep, he looked earnestly around him. Seeing that h alone, he arose and, making a circuit, went past the man was talking to the sentinel. This person had, in reply questions, doubtless obtained all the information he requ for soon afterwards he took leave of the sentinel, and wi *hesitation* followed the path taken by the cavalier,

had just passed him, and had stopped now under the shadow of a tent, and was waiting for him.

"Well, now, my dear friend?" he said, in the purest French that was ever spoken from Rouen to Tours.

"Well, my friend, there is no time to be lost — we must warn the King."

"What is the matter, then?"

"It would take too long to tell you; and you will hear it presently. Besides, one word uttered here might ruin everything. Let us go and find Lord de Winter."

They both walked to the other end of the camp; but as it did not cover more than five hundred feet square they soon reached the tent they sought.

"Is your master asleep, Tony?" said one of the cavaliers to a domestic who was lying in the first division of the tent, which served as an anteroom.

"No, Count," replied the lacquey, "I do not think that he is, or if so it must be very recently, as he was walking in his tent for two hours after he left the King, and his steps have not ceased more than ten minutes. Besides," continued the lacquey, raising the door of the tent, "you can see for yourselves."

In fact, De Winter was seated near an opening that served as a window and allowed the night air to enter; he was sorrowfully gazing at the moon, which, as we have just said, was sailing between two large black clouds.

The two friends approached De Winter, who, with his head resting on his hand, was looking at the heavens. He had not heard them enter, and remained in the same attitude until he felt some one lay his hand on his shoulder; then he turned round, recognised Athos and Aramis, and stretched out his hand to them.

"Have you remarked," said he, "that the moon is blooded this evening?"

"No," replied Athos; "it seemed to me to be the same as usual."

"Look, chevalier," said De Winter.

"I confess," said Aramis, "that I agree with the Comte de la Fère, and that I can see nothing peculiar."

"Earl," said Athos, "in a situation so precarious as ours, we must examine the earth and not the heavens. Have you watched our Scots, and are you sure of them?"

"The Scots?" demanded De Winter; "what Scots?"

"Why, ours, pardieu!" said Athos; "those whom the l has trusted — the Earl of Leven's Scots."

"No," said De Winter. Then he added: "So you tel that you cannot see, as I do, the red colour that cover heavens?"

"Not in the least," answered Athos and Aramis a same time.

"Tell me," said De Winter, still occupied with the idea, "is there not a tradition in France that the ev before Henry IV. was assassinated, when he was playi chess with M. de Bassompierre, he saw some spots of l on the chess-board?"

"Yes," replied Athos, "and the Marshal has often tol of it himself."

"That is it," murmured De Winter; "and the nex Henry was murdered."

"But what connection has this vision of Henry IV. you, Earl?" asked Athos.

"None whatever, gentlemen; and, in truth, I am wro trouble you with such things. Then your visit at my te this hour, declares that you must be the bearers of some i tant news."

"Yes, my Lord," said Athos, "I want to speak to the K

"To the King? But he is asleep."

"I have something of great importance to disclose to l

"Can it not be deferred till to-morrow?"

"He must know it immediately; even now, perhaps, too late."

"Let us go in, then, gentlemen," said De Winter.

De Winter's tent was pitched by the side of the royal and a kind of corridor led from the one to the other. passage was guarded not by a sentinel, but by the King's fidential valet; so that, in any emergency, Charles mig able to communicate instantaneously with his faithful se

"These gentlemen accompany me," said De Winter.

The lacquey bowed and permitted them to pass.

There, on a camp bed, clothed in his dark-coloured do with his long boots on, his belt loosened, and his hat nea lay Charles I. asleep, having yielded to unconquerable d ness.

The three men approached him, and Athos, who w

front, looked down for an instant in silence on that pale and noble face, encircled by his long black hair, which adhered to his forehead, moistened by a troubled dream and marbled by prominent blue veins, which seemed to be swelled by tears surcharging his wearied eyes.

Athos drew a deep sigh, which awakened the King, so lightly did he sleep.

He opened his eyes.

"Ah," he said, raising himself on his elbow, "is it you, Comte de la Fère?"

"Yes, Sire," responded Athos.

"You watch while I sleep, and you are come to tell me some news?"

"Alas! Sire," replied Athos, "your Majesty has guessed aright."

"Then the news is bad?" said the King, with a melancholy smile.

"Yes, Sire."

"Never mind; the messenger is welcome; and you can never present yourself before me without giving me pleasure — you, whose devotion distinguishes neither country nor misfortune — you, who were sent to me by Henrietta; whatever may be the intelligence you bring me, speak with confidence."

"Sire, Cromwell has arrived at Newcastle during the night."

"Ah!" said the King; "to fight me?"

"No, Sire, — to buy you."

"What are you saying?"

"I say, Sire, that four hundred thousand pounds sterling are owing to the Scottish troops."

"For arrears of pay? Yes, I know it; for nearly a year my brave and faithful Scots have been fighting for honour."

Athos smiled.

"Well, Sire, although honour may be a fine thing, they are tired of fighting for it; and this very night they have sold you for two hundred thousand pounds; that is to say, for half of what was due to them."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the King; "the Scots sell their King for two hundred thousand pounds?"

"The Jews sold their God for thirty pieces of silver."

"And who is the Judas who makes this infamous bargain?"

"The Earl of Leven."

"Are you sure of this, sir?"

"I heard it with my own ears."

The King heaved a deep sigh as if his heart was breakin and his head fell upon his hands.

"Oh, the Scots!" he exclaimed, "the Scots, whom I call my most faithful subjects! — the Scots, in whom I confided wh I might have fled to Oxford! — the Scots, my countrymen! the Scots, my brethren! But are you quite certain, sir?"

"As I lay on the ground behind Lord Leven's tent, I lift up the canvas. I saw and heard everything."

"And when is this detestable bargain to be ratified?"

"This very morning; as your Majesty sees, no time must lost."

"In doing what? Do you not say that I am sold?"

"To cross the Tyne, reach Scotland, join Montrose, who w not sell you."

"And what should I do in Scotland? A partisan warfa Such a war is unworthy of a king."

"The example of Robert Bruce will be your excuse, Sire.

"No, no; I have struggled too long! If they have sold r let them give me up, and let the eternal disgrace of such trea rest upon their heads."

"Sire," said Athos, "perhaps a king ought to act in t manner; but a husband and a father must act differently. came here in the name of your wife and daughter; and in th name, and in that of the two children that you have in Lond I say to you: Live, Sire, for God wishes it!"

The King arose, tightened his belt, girded on his sword, a wiping the moisture from his brow:

"Well, then," said he, "what must we do?"

"Sire, have you one regiment in the whole army in wh you can confide?"

"De Winter," said the King, "have you confidence in fidelity of yours?"

"Sire, they are but men; and men have either become v feeble or very wicked. I believe in their fidelity, but I c not answer for them. I would intrust them with my own l but should hesitate to intrust them with your Majesty's."

"Well, then," said Athos, "for want of a regiment, we three devoted men — we must suffice. Your Majesty m mount your horse and place yourself in the midst of us. will cross the Tyne and gain Scotland, where we shall be saf

"*Is that* your advice, De Winter?" demanded the King.

"Yes, Sire."

"And is it yours, Monsieur d'Herblay?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Well, then, let it be as you wish. De Winter, give the orders."

De Winter left the tent; meantime the King finished dressing. The first beams of day were beginning to penetrate the tent when De Winter returned.

"Everything is ready, Sire," said he.

"And for us?" asked Athos.

"Grimaud and Blaisois are holding your horses, ready saddled."

"In that case," said Athos, "let us not lose one moment, but go."

"Yes, let us go," said the King.

"Sire," said Aramis, "will not your Majesty inform your friends?"

"My friends!" exclaimed Charles I.; "I have no longer any but you three — one a friend of twenty years' standing, who has never forgotten me — two friends of a week's standing, whom I shall never forget. Come, gentlemen, come!"

The King left the tent and found his horse ready. It was a dun charger, which he had ridden for three years, and to which he was very much attached.

The horse, on seeing him, neighed with delight.

"Ah!" said the King, "I was unjust: here, if not a friend, is at any rate a creature that loves me. Thou wilt be faithful to me, wilt thou not, Arthus?"

And, as if he understood these words, the horse rubbed his nose against the King, lifting up his lips with pleasure, and displaying his white teeth.

"Yes, yes," said the King, patting him, — "yes, Arthus, I am satisfied with thee."

And with that agility which made the King one of the best horsemen in Europe, Charles leaped into his saddle, and turning to Athos, Aramis, and De Winter said:

"Well, gentlemen, I am ready for you."

But Athos stood motionless, with his eyes fixed, and his hand pointing toward a dark line that followed the course of the Tyne, and stretched far beyond the ends of the camp.

"What is that line?" asked Athos; for the last shades of night, contending with the first rays of morning, did not yet

permit him clearly to distinguish; "what is that line? I not see it yesterday."

"It is, doubtless, the mist rising from the river," said King.

"Sire, it is something more solid than vapour."

"In fact," said De Winter, "I can perceive something a reddish-coloured rampart."

"It is the enemy, coming out of Newcastle and surro ing us," cried Athos.

"The enemy!" exclaimed the King.

"Yes, the enemy. It is too late. Look — yonder u that ray of the sun — yonder toward the town — you ma the glitter of the Ironsides."

That was the name that had been given to the Cuiras whom Cromwell had made his Guard.

"Ah!" said the King, "we shall soon know whethe Scots have betrayed me."

"What are you going to do, Sire?" cried Athos.

"To command them to charge, and to crush those wret rebels."

And the King, spurring his horse, galloped toward the of Leven's tent.

"Let us follow him," said Athos.

"Come along!" said Aramis.

"Can the King be wounded?" said De Winter; "I ceive spots of blood on the ground."

And he dashed off after the two friends. Athos sto him.

"Go and muster your regiment," said he; "I see tha shall soon require it."

De Winter turned his horse, and the two friends conti their course. In two seconds the King had reached the of the commander-in-chief of the Scottish army. He le from his horse and entered the tent.

The General was surrounded by his principal officers.

"The King!" they exclaimed, rising and looking at another in stupefaction.

Charles stood before them, with his hat on his he frowning brow, and rapping his boot with his riding-whip

"Yes, gentlemen," he said, "the King in person - King — who comes to demand of you an account of wh *taking place.*"

"Why, what is the matter, Sire?" asked the Earl of Leven.

"The matter is, sir," replied the King, giving way to a burst of passion, "that Cromwell reached Newcastle last night, and that you, knowing this, have not informed me; it is, that the enemy is just leaving the town and barring our passage across the Tyne — that your sentinels must have seen this movement and have not apprised me of it — it is, that, by an infamous treaty, you have sold me to the Parliament for two hundred thousand pounds. Of this, at any rate, I have been informed. This, then, is the matter, gentlemen! Therefore answer, or exculpate yourselves; for I accuse you of it!"

"Sire," stammered the Earl of Leven, "your Majesty must have been deceived by some false report."

"I have with my own eyes seen the enemy's army stretched out between me and Scotland," said Charles; "and I may almost say that I myself heard the particulars of the bargain discussed."

The Scottish officers looked at one another with a frown.

"Sire," murmured the Earl of Leven, shrinking under the weight of his shame, — "Sire, we are willing to afford you every proof of our devotion."

"I demand only one," said the King: "place the army in battle array and march against the enemy."

"That is impossible, Sire," replied the Earl.

"How! Impossible! And what can prevent it?" cried Charles I.

"Your Majesty is well aware that there is a truce between us and the English army," replied the Earl.

"If there be a truce, the English army has broken it by issuing from the city contrary to the conventions, which required that they should remain shut up in it. Now I tell you that you must pass through this army with me, and return to Scotland. Should you not do this, well, then, choose between the two names that hold up men to the greatest contempt and execration of their fellows: you are either cowards or you are traitors."

The eyes of the Scots flashed fire, and, as often happens on similar occasions, they passed from the extreme of shame to that of audacity. Two chieftains of the clans advanced, one on each side of the King.

"Well, then," they said, "we have promised to deliver Eng

land and Scotland from him who, for five and twenty years, has been consuming the blood and the gold of England and of Scotland. We have promised it, and we keep our promise. King Charles Stuart, you are our prisoner!"

And they put forth their hands to seize the King; but before they could touch his person even with the end of their fingers they both fell, the one insensible and the other dead.

Athos had knocked down one with the butt end of his pistol, and Aramis had passed his sword through the body of the other.

Then, while the Earl of Leven and the other chieftains started back in surprise and consternation at this unexpected assistance, which seemed to have fallen from heaven, for him whom they already considered their prisoner, Athos and Aramis drew the King from the tent into which he had so rashly ventured, and leaping on their horses, which the lacqueys held ready, all of them galloped toward the royal tent.

On their way they perceived De Winter hurrying up with his regiment. The King made him a sign to accompany them.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE AVENGER.

All four entered the tent. They had no plan arranged; one had to be made.

The King sank into a chair.

"I am lost!" he exclaimed.

"No, Sire," replied Athos; "you are only betrayed."

The King heaved a deep sigh.

"Betrayed, betrayed by the Scots, amongst whom I was born, and whom I have always preferred to the English! Oh, the wretches!"

"Sire," said Athos, "this is not the time for recriminations, but the moment when you should prove that you are a king and a gentleman. Rise up, Sire, rise up! for you have here three men who, you may be sure, will never betray you. Ah, if we were only five!" murmured Athos, thinking of D'Artagnan and Porthos.

"*What* do you say?" demanded Charles, starting up.

"I say, Sire, that there is only one method. Lord de Winter ıswers for his regiment, or nearly so, — let us not cavil about ords. He will put himself at the head of his men; we will ace ourselves by your Majesty's side, cut our way through romwell's army, and gain Scotland."

"There is also another plan," said Aramis: "let one of us ssume his Majesty's dress and mount his horse. Thus, hile they are eagerly pursuing him, the King may perhaps scape."

"The advice is good," said Athos, "and if his Majesty will o one of us that honour, we shall be very grateful to him."

"What do you think of this advice, De Winter?" said the King, looking with admiration at the two men, whose only nxiety appeared to be to accumulate on their own heads the angers that threatened him.

"I think, Sire, that if there is any plan that can save your Majesty M. d'Herblay has just proposed it. I therefore humbly ntreat your Majesty to make your choice quickly, for we have o time to lose."

"But if I agree to it, it is death, or at least imprisonment, o him who shall take my place."

"It is the honour of having saved his King," said De Winter.

The King looked at his old friend with tears in his eyes, ook off the ribbon of the Holy Ghost, which he wore out of ompliment to the two Frenchmen who accompanied him, and hrew it over the neck of De Winter, who received, kneeling, his terrible proof of his sovereign's friendship and confidence.

"It is just," said Athos; "he has served him longer than ve have."

The King heard these words, and turned, with tears in his yes.

"Gentlemen," said he, "wait one moment; I have also a ordon to give to each of you.

And going to a chest, in which his own orders were placed, e took from it two ribbons of the Garter.

"These orders cannot be for us," said Athos.

"And why not, sir?" demanded Charles.

"These orders are almost regal, and we are but simple gentlemen."

"Permit all the thrones of the earth to pass before your yes," said the King, "and find me nobler hearts than yours.

No, no, you do not do yourselves justice, gentlemen; but I am here to do it for you. Kneel, Count."

The Count knelt, and the King passed the ribbon over his shoulder from left to right, as was usual; then raising his sword, instead of the customary formula: "I dub you a knight; be brave, faithful, and loyal," he said:

"You are brave, faithful, and loyal; I dub you a knight, Count."

Then turning to Aramis: "It is now your turn, Chevalier," said he.

And the same ceremony was repeated, while, aided by the squires, De Winter took off his brass cuirass, that he might more closely resemble the King.

Then, when Charles had finished with Aramis as he had done with Athos, he embraced them both.

"Sire," said De Winter, who, now that he was exhibiting this proof of his great devotion, had resumed all his energy and courage, "we are ready."

The King looked at the three gentlemen.

"Then we must flee?" said he.

"To flee through an army, Sire," said Athos, "is called charging, in every country of the world."

"Then I shall die sword in hand," said Charles. "Count, Chevalier, should I ever again be King"—

"Sire, you have already honoured us more than, as simple gentlemen, we had a right to expect; therefore the gratitude is due from us. But let us not lose time, for we have already lost too much."

The King for a last time held out his hand to them all, exchanged hats with De Winter, and left the tent.

De Winter's regiment was drawn up on an elevated spot that commanded the camp. The King, followed by his three friends, went to it.

The Scottish camp appeared to be at last roused; the men had left their tents and had taken their place in order of battle.

"Do you see?" said the King; "perhaps they repent and are ready to march."

"If they repent, Sire," said Athos, "they will follow us."

"Good!" said the King. "What shall we do?"

"Let us reconnoitre the enemy," said Athos.

The eyes of the little group were instantly fixed on the

lark line, which, at dawn of day, they had taken for a mist, nd which the first beams of the sun had proved to be an army lrawn up in battle array. The air was pure and clear, as it enerally is at that early hour. The regiments, with their tandards, and even the colours of the uniforms and horses, vere now plainly perceptible.

On an eminence, a little in advance of the enemy's position, hey beheld a short, thick-set, and heavy-looking man make iis appearance. He was surrounded by several officers. He pointed a telescope toward the group that included the King.

"Does that man know your Majesty personally?" asked Aramis.

Charles smiled.

"That is Cromwell," said he.

"Then pull your hat over your eyes, Sire, that he may not discover the substitution."

"Ah!" said Athos, "we have lost a great deal of time."

"Then give the command," said the King, "and let us go."

"Will you give it, Sire?" demanded Athos.

"No, I name you my lieutenant-general," replied the King.

"Listen, then, Lord de Winter," said Athos. "Retire a little, I beseech you, Sire; what we are going to say does not concern your Majesty."

The King, with a smile, stepped a few paces back.

"This is what I propose," continued Athos: "we will divide your regiment into two squadrons; put yourself at the head of one, and we, with his Majesty, will lead the other. Should nothing arise to obstruct our passage, we will charge in one body, force the enemy's line, and throw ourselves into the Tyne, which we must pass, either by a ford or by swimming. But if, on the contrary, we meet with any obstruction, you and your men must sacrifice yourselves, even to the last man, while we and the King continue our course. Having once reached the banks of the river, if your squadron does its duty we shall force our way through, even should the enemy be drawn up three ranks deep."

"To horse!" said De Winter.

"To horse!" repeated Athos; "everything is arranged."

"Then, gentlemen," said the King, "forward! and let our rallying cry be that of France: 'Montjoie and Saint Denis!' for the battle-cry of England is now in the mouths of traitors."

They mounted *their horses*, the King taking De Winter's

and De Winter the King's. Then De Winter put himself at the head of the first squadron, and the King, with Athos on his right and Aramis on his left, at the head of the second.

The whole Scottish army observed these preparations with the immobility and silence of shame.

Some chieftains were seen to leave the ranks and break their swords.

"Ah!" cried the King, "that is some comfort to me—they are not all traitors!"

At this moment Lord de Winter's voice was heard:

"Forward!" he cried.

The first squadron moved on; the second followed it and descended from the elevated ground. A regiment of cuirassiers, of about equal strength, now made its appearance from behind the hill and came full speed to meet them.

The King pointed out to Athos and Aramis what was going on.

"Sire," said Athos, "the case is provided for; and if De Winter's men do their duty, that manœuvre will save instead of destroying us."

At this moment De Winter's voice was heard above all the surrounding tumult, exclaiming:

"Draw sabres!"

At this command every sword instantly leapt from its scabbard, each like a flash of lightning.

"Come, gentlemen," cried the King, in his turn excited by the sound and sight, — "come, gentlemen, draw your sabres!"

But this command, and the example set by the King, was obeyed by Athos and Aramis alone.

"We are betrayed," said the King, in a low voice.

"Wait a moment," said Athos; "perhaps they did not recognise your Majesty's voice, and are waiting for the orders of their own commander."

"Did they not hear their colonel's? But see! see!" exclaimed the King, stopping his horse with a sudden jerk that brought him on his haunches, and seizing hold of the bridle of Athos's horse.

"Ah! cowards, wretches, traitors!" cried De Winter; they could hear his voice, while his men, quitting their ranks, scattered over the plain.

About a score of men formed themselves into a group *around him*, and awaited the charge of Cromwell's cuirassiers.

"Come, let us die with them!" exclaimed the King.

"Come, let us die!" responded Athos and Aramis.

"Rally round me, ye faithful hearts!" cried De Winter.

This cry reached the two friends, who went off at a gallop.

"No quarter," cried a voice in French, in answer to De Winter's, — a voice that made them start.

As for De Winter, at the sound of that voice he became pale and almost petrified.

It was the voice of a cavalier, who, mounted on a superb black horse, charged at the head of an English regiment, which, in his ardour, he preceded by ten paces.

"It is he!" murmured De Winter, with his eyes fixed and letting his sword drop by his side.

"The King! The King!" shouted many voices, deceived by De Winter's blue ribbon and dun horse; "take him alive!"

"No, it is not the King!" exclaimed the cavalier; "do not be deceived. You are not the King, are you, Lord de Winter? Are you not my uncle?"

And at the same moment Mordaunt — for it was he — pointed a pistol at De Winter. The shot was fired, the ball passed through the breast of the aged gentleman, who made a single bound in his saddle and then fell back into the arms of Athos, murmuring:

"The avenger!"

"Remember my mother!" shouted Mordaunt as he passed, carried forward by the impetuous fury of his horse.

"You wretch!" cried Aramis, firing at him point-blank as he galloped by; but the priming only flashed in the pan.

An entire regiment now attacked the few men who had kept their ground, and the two Frenchmen were surrounded and hard pressed. Athos, being assured that De Winter was dead, let fall the body, and drawing his sword:

"Come, Aramis," said he, "for the honour of France!" And the two Englishmen who happened to be nearest to them fell mortally wounded.

At the same moment a terrible clamour was heard, and thirty swords gleamed around their heads.

Suddenly a man rushed from the midst of the English ranks, overthrowing everything in his way, and leaping upon Athos he encircled him in his brawny arms, at the same time snatching his sword from his hand, and whispering in his ear, "Be silent! — surrender! To yield to me is not to yield."

A giant had also seized Aramis by the wrists; he vainly struggled to free himself from this formidable grip.

"Surrender!" he said, looking earnestly at him.

Aramis raised his head. Athos turned.

"D'Art" — Athos was crying out, when the Gascon closed his mouth with his hand.

"I surrender," said Aramis, delivering up his sword to Porthos.

"Fire! fire!" exclaimed Mordaunt, returning to the group in which were the two friends.

"Why should we fire?" said the colonel; "all have surrendered."

"It is Milady's son!" said Athos to D'Artagnan.

"I recognised him."

"It is the monk!" said Porthos to Aramis.

"I know it."

At the same time the ranks began to open. D'Artagnan held the bridle of Athos's horse, and Porthos that of Aramis's. Each endeavoured to withdraw his prisoner from the field of battle.

This movement disclosed the spot where De Winter had fallen. With the instinct of hatred, Mordaunt had discovered it, and, stooping down from his horse, was regarding it with a hideous smile.

Athos, calm as he was, put his hand to his hostlers, still supplied with pistols.

"What are you going to do?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Let me kill him!"

"Not even a gesture to betray that you know him, or we are all four lost."

Then turning to the young man:

"A good capture," he cried out — "a good capture, friend Mordaunt. We have each made one, — M. du Vallon and myself, — nothing less than Knights of the Garter."

"But," said Mordaunt, looking at Athos and Aramis with his bloodshot eyes, — "but these are Frenchmen, I believe."

"Faith, I know nothing about that. Are you a Frenchman, sir?" he said to Athos.

"I am, sir," he gravely replied.

"Then, my dear sir, you are prisoner to a fellow-countryman."

"But the King?" said Athos, with great anguish; "how *about the* King?"

D'Artagnan squeezed his prisoner's hand, and said, "The King? — we have him."

"Yes," said Aramis, "by infamous treachery."

Porthos almost crushed his friend's hand, and said to him with a smile:

"Ah, sir, war is carried on as much by address as by force. Look there!"

In fact, the squadron that ought to have protected Charles's retreat was now seen advancing toward an English regiment, surrounding the King, who was walking alone, in a large open pace. The Prince was apparently calm; but what he must have suffered to appear calm was plainly perceptible. The perspiration was dropping from his forehead, and he was continually wiping his temples and his lips with a handkerchief, which, every time that it was withdrawn from his mouth, was tinged with blood.

"There, look at Nebuchadnezzar!" exclaimed one of Cromwell's soldiers, an old Puritan, whose eyes flashed on beholding him whom they called the tyrant.

"Whom do you call Nebuchadnezzar?" said Mordaunt, with a frightful smile. "No, it is King Charles, — the good King Charles, — who robs his subjects that he may enjoy their property!"

Charles turned his eyes toward the insolent personage who thus spoke, but he did not know him. And yet the calm and resigned majesty of that face made Mordaunt hang his head.

"Gentlemen," said the King, seeing that Athos and Aramis were prisoners, "the day has been unfavourable; but it is not your fault, thank God! Where is my old friend, De Winter?"

The two gentlemen turned away their heads and remained silent.

"Ask, where is Strafford?" said Mordaunt's harsh voice.

Charles started. The demon had struck home: Strafford was his perpetual remorse, the shadow of his days, the phantom of his nights.

The King looked around him, and saw a dead body lying at his feet. It was De Winter's.

Charles did not utter a cry, did not shed a tear; he only became more deadly pale. Placing one knee on the ground, he raised De Winter's head, pressed his lips to his brow, and taking the ribbon of the Holy Ghost from his neck, placed it solemnly on his own breast.

"So De Winter is slain?" demanded D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes on the dead body.

"Yes," said Athos, "and by his nephew!"

"Well, there is the first of us gone," muttered D'Artagnan. "May he sleep in peace, for he was a brave man!"

"Charles Stuart," said the English colonel, advancing toward the King, who had just resumed the insignia of royalty, "do you yield yourself my prisoner?"

"Colonel Tomlinson," answered Charles, "the King does not surrender; the man yields to force — that is all."

"Your sword!"

The King drew his sword and broke it on his knee.

At this moment a horse without a rider, and dripping with foam, with eyes of fire and inflated nostrils, galloped up, and recognising his master, stopped close to him, neighing with joy; it was Arthus.

The King smiled, patted him, and lightly vaulted into the saddle.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "take me where you please."

Then, turning quickly, "Wait," said he; "I fancy that I saw De Winter move. Should he yet live, I charge you, by all that you hold most sacred, not to abandon that noble gentleman."

"Oh, make yourself easy, King Charles," said Mordaunt; "the ball pierced his heart!"

"Do not breathe a syllable, do not make a single motion, do not hazard a look toward me or Porthos," said D'Artagnan to Athos and Aramis; "for Milady is not dead — her soul still lives in that demon's body."

The detachment proceeded toward the town, carrying with them the royal captive; but when they had traversed half the distance one of Cromwell's *aides-de-camp* brought an order to Colonel Tomlinson to conduct the King to Holdenby Castle.

At the same time couriers were despatched in all directions, to announce to England, and to Europe, that Charles Stuart was Oliver Cromwell's prisoner.

CHAPTER LIX.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

"ARE you not going to visit the General?" said Mordaunt to D'Artagnan and Porthos; "you know that he commanded you to do so after the action."

"We must first dispose of our prisoners in a safe place," replied D'Artagnan. "Do you know that these gentlemen are worth fifteen hundred pistoles each?"

"Oh, make yourself easy," said Mordaunt, looking at them and vainly striving to discard ferocity; "my troops will guard them well. I will be responsible to you for them."

"I shall guard them better myself," answered D'Artagnan. "Besides, what do we require? Merely a good room with sentinels; or their mere parole that they will not endeavour to escape. I will go and arrange all this; and then we shall have the honour of presenting ourselves before the General, and learn his commands to his Eminence."

"So you think of shortly returning?" demanded Mordaunt.

"Our mission is completed, and nothing will keep us longer in England except the will of the great man to whom we were sent."

The young man bit his lips; and whispering to the sergeant he said: "You will follow these men, you will not lose sight of them, and when you know where they are lodged you will come and wait for me at the gate of the town."

The sergeant signified his readiness to obey.

Then instead of following the body of the prisoners, whom they were taking into the town, Mordaunt went toward the little hill from which Cromwell had overlooked the battle, and where he had caused his tent to be pitched.

Cromwell had forbidden any one to be admitted to his presence; but the sentinel, who knew Mordaunt as one of his General's most intimate confidants, thought that the prohibition did not refer to the young man.

So Mordaunt lifted the flap of the tent, and saw Cromwell seated at a table, with his face buried in his hands and his back turned toward him.

Whether he heard Mordaunt's entrance or not, Cromwell did not *turn round.*

Mordaunt remained standing in the doorway.

After a little, however, Cromwell raised his gloomy bı and, as if he had instinctively felt that some one was there slowly turned his head.

"I said that I wished to be alone!" he exclaimed, on se the young man.

"That prohibition was not supposed to refer to me, s said Mordaunt. "Nevertheless, if you command, I am re to go."

"Ah! is it you, Mordaunt?" said Cromwell, clearing a as if by an effort of his will the veil that covered his e "well, since it is you, you may remain."

"I offer you my congratulations!"

"Your congratulations! And for what?"

"For the capture of Charles Stuart. You are now the ı ter of England."

"I was much more so two hours ago," said Cromwell.

"How is that, General?"

"England needed me — to capture the tyrant; now th rant is captured. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mordaunt.

"And how did he comport himself?"

Mordaunt hesitated; but the truth appeared to force it from his lips:

"Calm and dignified."

"What did he say?"

"A few farewell words to his friends."

"To his friends!" murmured Cromwell; "he has frie then?"

Then aloud:

"Did he defend himself?"

"No, sir, he was abandoned by all, except three or men; so he had no means of resistance."

"To whom did he give up his sword?"

"He did not give it up — he broke it."

"He did well. But he would have done even better, if, stead of breaking it, he had used it with greater skill."

There was a moment's silence.

"The colonel of the regiment that served as escort to King, to Charles, was slain, I believe?" said Cromwell, fi his eye earnestly on Mordaunt.

"*Yes, sir.*"

"By whom?" inquired Cromwell.

"By me."

"What was his name?"

"Lord de Winter."

"Your uncle?" exclaimed Cromwell.

"My uncle!" replied Mordaunt; "traitors to England do not belong to my family."

Cromwell remained thoughtful for an instant, looking on the young man. Then, with that deep melancholy which Shakespeare paints so well:

"Mordaunt," said he, "you are a terrible servitor."

"When the Lord commands," replied Mordaunt, "there is no disputing His orders. Abraham raised the knife against Isaac, and Isaac was his son."

"Yes," said Cromwell, "but the Lord did not allow the sacrifice to be completed."

"I looked around me," rejoined Mordaunt, "and I saw neither goat nor kid caught in the thickets of the plain."

Cromwell bowed his head.

"You are strong amongst the strong, Mordaunt," said he. "And how did the Frenchmen behave themselves?"

"Like brave men, sir," replied Mordaunt.

"Yes, yes," said Cromwell, "the French fight well, and I am not mistaken. I saw, through my telescope, that they were in the foremost rank."

"They were there," said Mordaunt.

"Behind you, however," said Cromwell.

"It was not their fault, but that of their horses."

There was again a moment's silence.

"And the Scots?" said Cromwell.

"They kept their word, and did not move a step."

"The wretches!" murmured Cromwell.

"Their officers demand an interview."

"I have no leisure. Have they been paid?"

"Yes; this night."

"Let them go then — let them return to their mountains — let them there hide their shame, if their mountains are lofty enough for that! I have nothing more to do with them, nor they with me! Now go, Mordaunt."

"Before I go," said Mordaunt, "I have one or two questions to ask you, sir, and a request to make of you, my master."

"Of me?"

Mordaunt bowed.

"I come to you — my hero, my protector, my father — and I say, 'Master, are you satisfied with me?'"

Cromwell looked at him with astonishment.

The young man remained unmoved.

"Yes," said Cromwell. "Since I have known you, you have done, not only your duty, but even more than your duty: you have been a faithful friend, a skilful negotiator, and a good soldier."

"Do you remember, sir, that I was the first person who suggested the idea of treating with the Scots to abandon their King?"

"Yes, the thought originated with you, it is true. I had not yet carried my scorn for men so far."

"Was I a successful ambassador in France?"

"Yes; and you obtained what I wanted from Mazarin."

"Have I always striven earnestly for your glory and your interest?"

"Too ardently, perhaps; that is what I reproached you for just now. But what is your object in all these questions?"

"It is, my Lord, that the moment is now come when one word from you can recompense me for all these services."

"Ah!" said Cromwell, with a slight movement of contempt; "it is true, I forgot that every service deserves its reward — that you have served me, and that you have not been recompensed."

"Sir, I can be so instantly, and far beyond my expectations."

"How is that?"

"I have the reward within my reach, and almost grasp it."

"And what is this reward?" asked Cromwell. "Has gold been offered to you? Do you demand rank? Do you desire a command?"

"Sir, will you grant my request?"

"Let me first hear what it is."

"Sir, when you have said to me, 'Go and execute an order,' have I ever inquired, 'What is that order?'"

"But should your request be impossible to grant?"

"Whenever you desired anything to be done, and charged me with the execution of it, have I ever answered, 'It is impossible'?"

"*But a demand* preceded by so much preparation" —

"Ah! rest easy, sir," said Mordaunt, with an expression of simplicity; "it will not ruin you."

"Well, then," said Cromwell, "I promise to grant your request, in so far as it lies in my power. Ask!"

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "two prisoners were taken this morning. I ask them of you."

"Why, have they offered a considerable ransom?" inquired Cromwell.

"On the contrary, I believe that they are poor."

"They are friends of yours, then?"

"Yes, sir, they are friends of mine," cried Mordaunt, "dear friends of mine, and I would give my life for theirs."

"Well," said Cromwell, resuming, with a certain emotion of pleasure, a better opinion of the young man, — "well, Mordaunt, I give them to you. I do not even wish to know who they are. Do what you like with them."

"Thank you, sir," exclaimed Mordaunt — "thank you! My life is henceforth yours, and even in losing it, I should still be your debtor. Thank you! You have just rewarded me munificently for my services!"

And throwing himself on his knees before Cromwell, in spite of the efforts of the Puritan General, who did not wish, or pretended not to wish, to receive this almost regal homage, he took his hand and kissed it.

"What!" said Cromwell, stopping him as he rose up, — "no other recompense? No gold? No rank?"

"You have given me all you could give me, my Lord, and from this day I consider you discharged from all further obligation."

And Mordaunt rushed out of the tent with a joy that overflowed from his heart and his eyes.

Cromwell looked after him.

"He slew his uncle!" he murmured.

"Alas! what followers are mine! Perhaps this man, who claims nothing from me, or appears to do so, may have demanded more of me, in the sight of God, than those who ask me for gold of the provinces and the bread of the poor. No one serves me for nothing. Charles, who is my prisoner, has perhaps yet some friends, and I have not one!"

And with a deep sigh he resumed his reverie, which had been interrupted by Mordaunt.

CHAPTER LX.

THE GENTLEMEN.

WHILE Mordaunt was on his way to Cromwell's tent, D'Artagnan and Porthos were leading their prisoners to the house that had been assigned them for a lodging at Newcastle.

The order given by Mordaunt to the sergeant had not escaped the Gascon's observation. So he had by a quick look recommended the strictest caution to Athos and Aramis. They had, consequently, walked in silence by the side of their conquerors; but this was not hard to do, as each was sufficiently occupied with his own thoughts.

If ever a man was astonished it was Mousqueton, when as he stood on the doorstep he beheld the four friends advancing, followed by the sergeant and about a dozen men. He rubbed his eyes, not being able to persuade himself that he really saw Athos and Aramis, but at last he was compelled to believe the evidence of his eyes. So he was just on the point of breaking out into exclamations, when Porthos imposed silence on him by one of those glances that cannot be misunderstood.

Mousqueton remained standing by the door, awaiting the explanation of such a strange circumstance, and what more than all perplexed him was that the four friends appeared no longer to know one another.

The house to which D'Artagnan and Porthos conducted Athos and Aramis was that which they had inhabited the evening before, and which had been assigned to them by Cromwell. It was the corner house of the street, with a garden and stables on the adjoining street.

The windows of the ground floor, as was then often the case in small provincial towns, were grated, so that they much resembled those of a prison.

The two friends, having made their prisoners enter, remained at the door themselves, and Mousqueton conducted the four horses to the stables.

"Why do not we go in with them?" inquired Porthos.

"Because, first, we must find out what this sergeant and his eight or ten men want with us."

The sergeant and his men were establishing themselves in

the garden. D'Artagnan inquired what they wanted and why they stationed themselves there.

"We have received orders," replied the sergeant, "to assist you in guarding your prisoners."

There was nothing objectionable in this. It was, in fact, a delicate attention, for which they had every reason to appear grateful. D'Artagnan thanked the sergeant, and gave him a crown to drink Cromwell's health.

The sergeant informed him that the Puritans did not drink; but he put the money into his pocket.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "what a frightful day, my dear D'Artagnan."

"What are you saying, Porthos! Do you call that a frightful day in which we have found our friends again?"

"Yes, but under what circumstances!"

"True, the conjuncture is embarrassing," said D'Artagnan. "But never mind; let us go to them and endeavour to obtain a distinct view of our position."

"It is sadly perplexed," said Porthos; "and I now understand why Aramis recommended me to strangle this horrible Mordaunt."

"Silence, then!" said D'Artagnan; "do not utter that name."

"But," said Porthos, "I am talking French, and these are Englishmen."

D'Artagnan gazed at Porthos with that expression of astonishment which a rational man cannot withhold from eccentricities of every kind.

Then, as Porthos kept looking at him without in the slightest degree comprehending the cause of his surprise, D'Artagnan gave him a push, saying, "Let us go in!"

Porthos entered first; D'Artagnan followed him; and having carefully closed the door, he folded his friends successively in his arms.

Athos was quite overpowered with melancholy; Aramis looked from Porthos to D'Artagnan without saying a word, but his looks were so expressive that D'Artagnan understood them.

"You wish to know how it happens that we are here? Ah! mon Dieu! it is easy enough to guess. Mazarin sent us with a letter to Oliver Cromwell."

"But how is it that we find you by Mordaunt's side?" said

Athos; "that Mordaunt whom I told you to distrust, D'Artagnan."

"And whom I advised you to choke, Porthos," added Aramis.

"Still Mazarin. Cromwell sent him to Mazarin — Mazarin sent us to Cromwell. There is a fatality in all this!"

"Yes, you are right, D'Artagnan, — a fatality which dissevers and destroys us, so that, my dear Aramis, let us say no more about it, but prepare to submit to our lot."

"Sang-Diou! let us, on the contrary, say a great deal about it," said D'Artagnan; "for it has been agreed upon, once for all, that we are forever united, although we may support opposite causes."

"Oh, yes, opposite indeed!" said Athos, smiling. "And here I ask you what cause is it that you are supporting! Ah, D'Artagnan! see on what service that wretch Mazarin employs you. Do you know the crime of which you have this day been guilty? Of the capture of the King, of his ignominy, of his death!"

"Oho!" exclaimed Porthos, "do you think so?"

"You exaggerate, Athos," replied D'Artagnan, "we have not yet come to that."

"Ah, mon Dieu! but we are approaching it. Why do they arrest a king? When they wish to respect him as a master, they do not purchase him like a slave. Do you believe that Cromwell has paid two hundred thousand pounds for him to replace him on his throne? Friends, rest assured that they will murder him, and that is the least crime they can commit. It is better to cut off a king's head than to strike him."

"I do not contradict you, and, after all, it may be possible," said D'Artagnan. "But what is all this to us? I am here because I am a soldier, because I serve my masters; that is to say, those from whom I receive my pay. I took an oath of obedience, and I obey; but you, who have taken no oaths, why are you here, and what cause do you support?"

"The most sacred cause in the world," said Athos; "that of misfortune, of royalty, of religion. A friend, a wife, a daughter, did us the honour to call us to their aid. We have served them to the utmost of our feeble means, and God will take the will for the deed. You may think differently, D'Artagnan; you may see things under a different aspect, my friend. I do not attempt to influence you, but yet I blame you."

"*Oho!*" *said* D'Artagnan; "and, after all, what does it

gnify to me that M. Cromwell, who is an Englishman, has ıbelled against his King, who is a Scotsman? I am a French- an, and these things do not affect me; why, then, should you ake me responsible for them.?"

"Why, indeed!" said Porthos.

"Because all gentlemen are brothers — because you are a ɜntleman — because the kings of all countries are the first of ɜntlemen — because the common people, blind, ungrateful, ıd besotted, always take a pleasure in degrading what is ıperior to them. And you, D'Artagnan, a man of the old ɔblesse, a man of an ancient name, a splendid swordsman, ɜsist in delivering up a king to hucksters of beer, to tailors ıd carters. Ah, D'Artagnan! as a soldier, perhaps you have ɔne your duty; but as a gentleman, you are to blame, and I ıll you so."

D'Artagnan, who was biting a flower-stalk, did not answer; ıt he felt uncomfortable, for when he turned his face away ·om Athos's eyes he met Aramis's.

"And you, Porthos," continued the Count, as if he pitied 'Artagnan's confusion, "you, the bravest heart, the best ·iend, the most accomplished soldier that I know — you, whom ɔur soul made worthy of being born on the steps of a throne, ıd who, sooner or later, will be rewarded by an intelligent ɔvereign — you, my dear Porthos — you, a gentleman by your ıanners, your tastes, and your courage — you are as blame- orthy as D'Artagnan."

Porthos coloured, but more with pleasure than confusion, ıd yet he hung down his head as if he had been humbled.

"Yes, yes, I believe that you are right, my dear Count."

Athos rose up.

"Come," said he, approaching D'Artagnan and taking his and, "do not pout, my dear son, for all that I have said to ou has been uttered, if not with the voice, at any rate with ıe heart, of a father. It would, believe me, have been easier ɔr me to have thanked you for having saved my life, and not ɔ have given you one word of my sentiments."

"Without doubt, Athos, without doubt," replied D'Artagnan, ressing his hand. "But then you have such devilish fine entiments, and few can share them. Who could ever imagine hat any reasonable man would quit his home, his country, his ɾard, — a splendid young fellow, for we saw him at the camp, — to run, after what? Why, to the assistance of a rotten and

worm-eaten royalty, that, some fine morning, will crumble to pieces like an old barrack. Your sentiments are doubtless very fine — so fine that they are superhuman."

"Whatever they may be, D'Artagnan," said Athos (without falling into the trap that his friend, with his true Gascon address, had laid for him, by touching on his affection for Raoul) — "whatever they may be, you know at heart that they are right. But I am wrong to argue with my master. D'Artagnan, I am your prisoner; treat me as such."

"Ah, pardieu!" cried D'Artagnan, "you know very well that you will not long be my prisoner."

"No," said Aramis, "for they will treat us as they did those taken at Philiphaugh."

"And how did they treat them?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Why," said Aramis, "they hanged half and shot half."

"Well, then," said D'Artagnan, "I promise you that while a drop of blood remains in my veins, you shall be neither hanged nor shot. Sang-Diou! let them come. Besides, do you see that door, Athos?"

"Well?"

"Well, you may pass through that door whenever you please; for, from this moment, you and Aramis are free as air."

"There do I truly recognise you, my brave D'Artagnan," said Athos; "but we are no longer in your power. That door is guarded, D'Artagnan. You know it."

"Well, then, you will force it," said Porthos. "What is it? Ten men, more or less."

"That would be nothing for four of us," said Athos; "but it is too much for two of us. No, divided as we now are, we must perish. Mark the fatal example: on the Vendômois road, D'Artagnan, you so brave, Porthos, you so valiant and so powerful, were beaten. To-day Aramis and myself were also beaten; it was our turn. Now, that never happened to us when we four were united. Let us die, then, as De Winter died. I declare that I will never consent to fly, unless all four go together."

"Impossible!" said D'Artagnan; "we are under Mazarin's command."

"I know it, and do not further press you. My arguments have been of no avail; and doubtless they were bad, since they have had no effect on minds as just as yours."

"Besides, even had they succeeded," said Aramis, "it is

much better not to compromise two such excellent friends as D'Artagnan and Porthos. Rely upon it, gentlemen, we shall not disgrace you by our deaths. I for one shall feel quite proud in confronting death with you, Athos, by bullet or even by the hangman's rope; for never have you appeared to me so truly great as on this day."

D'Artagnan said nothing; but, after having chewed his flower-stalk, he began to gnaw his fingers.

"You fancy, then, that they are going to kill you?" he said at length. "And why? Who has any interest in your death? Besides, you are our prisoners."

"Credulous, triply credulous!" said Aramis. "Can it be you do not know Mordaunt? I have exchanged but one glance with him, and by that glance alone I saw that we were doomed."

"The fact is, I am monstrous sorry that I did not choke him, as you told me, Aramis," said Porthos.

"Ah! despise that Mordaunt!" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "*Cap de Diou!* if he comes too near me, I will crush him — the insect! Do not fly, then; it is perfectly unnecessary; for I swear that you are as safe here as you were twenty years ago — you, Athos, in the Rue Férou, and you, Aramis, in the Rue de Vaugirard."

"There," said Athos, pointing to one of the grated windows that gave light to the apartment, "you will soon know what you have to do, for he is hastening here."

"Who?"

"Mordaunt."

In fact, on looking in the direction indicated by Athos, D'Artagnan saw a horseman approaching at a gallop.

It was Mordaunt.

D'Artagnan rushed out of the room.

Porthos was about to follow him.

"Remain," said D'Artagnan, "and do not come out until I drum on the door."

CHAPTER LXI.

JÉSUS SEIGNEUR.

When Mordaunt came opposite the house, he saw D'Artagnan at the door and the armed soldiers lying scattered about on the grass.

"Hullo!" he cried, in a voice hoarse from the haste with which he had ridden, "are the prisoners still here?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant, rising quickly, as well as his men, who all hastily touched their hats.

"Good; four men, immediately, to lead them to my quarters."

Four men stepped forward.

"Beg pardon," said D'Artagnan, in that bantering tone which our readers must have often observed in him since they became acquainted with him. "What is it, if you please?"

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "I was commanding four men to take the prisoners whom we captured this morning, and to conduct them to my quarters."

"And why so?" demanded D'Artagnan. "Pardon my curiosity; but you can understand that I wish to be informed."

"Because the prisoners now belong to me," replied Mordaunt haughtily; "and I shall dispose of them according to my own fancy."

"Pardon me, pardon me, my young sir," said D'Artagnan; "it seems to me that you are making a slight mistake. It is customary for prisoners to belong to those who have taken them — not to those who saw them taken. You might have taken Lord de Winter, who was your uncle, as I have been told, but you preferred killing him; that is all very well. M. du Vallon and myself might have killed these two gentlemen; but we preferred taking them. Every one to his own taste."

Mordaunt's lips turned pale.

D'Artagnan saw that matters would soon get worse, and began to drum the Guard's March on the door.

At the first measure Porthos came out and stood on the other side of the door, his feet touching the threshold and his head the top.

This manœuvre did not escape Mordaunt's observation.

"*Sir,*" said he, with a warmth that began to get the better

f him, "resistance will be useless. These prisoners have ıst been given to me by the Commander-in-chief, my illus- ious patron, Oliver Cromwell."

These words came upon D'Artagnan like a thunderbolt. he blood mounted to his temples, a mist passed before his es; he thoroughly comprehended the young man's savage ope, and his hand descended, as it were instinctively, to his vord hilt.

Porthos watched D'Artagnan's every motion, that he might gulate his own movements accordingly.

Porthos's looks disturbed D'Artagnan more than they ıcouraged him, and he began to reproach himself for having lled forth the brute force of Porthos in an affair that seemed him most properly managed by stratagem.

"Violence," said he to himself, "would ruin us all. D'Arta- ıan, my friend, prove to this young viper that you are not ly stronger, but also keener, than he is."

"Ah!" said he, making a low bow, "why did you not tell e that at first, M. Mordaunt? What! You come from Gen- al Cromwell, the most illustrious captain of the age?"

"I have but just left him, sir," said Mordaunt, dismounting d giving his horse to one of the soldiers to hold; "I have ft him this very moment."

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear sir?" continued Artagnan. "All England belongs to M. Cromwell; and, ıce you come to ask my prisoners in his name, I bow to his cision. They are yours, sir, — take them!"

Mordaunt came forward, radiant with joy; and Porthos, terly annihilated, and looking at D'Artagnan with profound ıpefaction, was opening his mouth to speak.

D'Artagnan trod on his foot; then he understood that his iend was only playing off some artifice.

Mordaunt set foot on the threshold, and, with his hat in hand, as just going to pass between the two friends, beckoning to s four men to follow him.

"But pardon me, sir," said D'Artagnan, with the sweetest ıile and laying his hand on the young man's shoulder; "if the lustrious General Oliver Cromwell has disposed of our pris- ıers in your favour, he has doubtless made you this gift in riting."

Mordaunt stopped short.

"He has doubtless furnished you with a letter for me —

the least scrap of paper, in fact — that may certify that you come in his name. Will you be so kind as to confide this letter to me, that I may at least have some excuse for this abandonment of my fellow countrymen. Otherwise, you see, although I am quite certain that General Cromwell can wish them no harm, it might have a bad appearance."

Mordaunt drew back, and feeling the blow, he launched a terrible look at D'Artagnan; but he responded by the most amiable and friendly expression that ever adorned a countenance.

"When I make an assertion, sir," said Mordaunt, "do you insult me by doubting it?"

"I!" exclaimed D'Artagnan; "I doubt what you say? God forbid, my dear Monsieur Mordaunt! On the contrary, I consider you a worthy and accomplished gentleman, according to all appearance; and besides, sir, — do you wish me to speak frankly?" continued D'Artagnan, in his frankest manner.

"Speak, sir," said Mordaunt.

"Monsieur du Vallon, who, by the way, is rich, — he has forty thousand livres income, and, consequently, does not think of money; I do not speak, therefore, for him, but for myself."

"Well, sir?"

"Well, then, I am not rich. In Gascony it is no disgrace, sir. No one is rich there, and Henry IV., of glorious memory, who was the King of all the Gascons, as his Majesty Philip IV. is the King of all the Spains, had never a sou in his pocket."

"Make an end, sir," said Mordaunt; "I see what you mean; and should it be what I conjecture that restrains you, the difficulty may be removed."

"Ah! I knew well enough," said D'Artagnan, "that you were a lad of talent. Well, then, here is the fact — here is where the saddle galls, as we French say: I am an officer of fortune — nothing more. I have nothing but what I gain by my sword; that is to say, more blows than bank notes. Now, on taking two Frenchmen this morning, who seemed to me to be men of high birth, being Knights of the Garter, I said to myself, 'My fortune is made.' I say two, because, in such circumstances, M. du Vallon, who is rich, always yields his prisoners to me."

Mordaunt, completely deceived by D'Artagnan's verbose good-nature, smiled like a man who well understands the reasons that have been given to him, and replied gently:

"*I will get* the order signed immediately, sir, and with it

two thousand pistoles; but, in the meantime, sir, allow me to take these men away."

"No," said D'Artagnan; "what signifies a half hour's delay? I am a man of methodical habits; therefore let us do the thing according to rule."

"And yet, sir," replied Mordaunt, "I could force you to comply; for I command here."

"Ah, sir," said D'Artagnan, smiling agreeably, "it is plain enough that, though M. du Vallon and I have had the honour of travelling in your company, you do not yet know us. We are gentlemen, we are Frenchmen; we are able, we two alone, to kill you and your eight men. For God's sake, M. Mordaunt, do not be obstinate; for that will make me obstinate, too, and then I become ferociously stubborn! And there is also my friend, who is even more headstrong than I am; without considering that we are ambassadors from Cardinal Mazarin, who represents the King of France; consequently, we at this time represent both the King and the Cardinal; so that, in our character as ambassadors, we are inviolable — a circumstance that M. Cromwell, as great a politician as he is a general, is just the man to understand. Ask him, therefore, for the written order. What can it signify to you, my dear Monsieur Mordaunt?"

"Yes, the written order," said Porthos, who began to comprehend D'Artagnan's intention; "we only want that."

However much Mordaunt might have wished to have recourse to violence, he was just the man to appreciate D'Artagnan's reasons. Besides, his reputation imposed some restraint on him; and what he had himself seen of D'Artagnan coming in aid of his reputation, he paused. Moreover, being completely ignorant of the profound friendship that existed among the four Frenchmen, all his disquietude disappeared before the motive of the ransom, plausible as it was.

So he resolved to go, not only for the order, but for the two thousand pistoles at which he had himself valued the two prisoners.

Mordaunt therefore again mounted his horse, and, after having commanded the sergeant to keep a strict guard, he turned his horse's head and disappeared.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "a quarter of an hour to go to the tent, a quarter of an hour to return; it is more than we require."

Then, turning to Porthos without the slightest change countenance, so that those who were watching him mi fancy that he was merely continuing the conversation:

"Friend Porthos," said he, looking him in the face, "lis to what I say: first, not one single word to our friends what you have just heard; it is unnecessary for them to kı the service we have done them."

"Very well — I understand," said Porthos.

"Go to the stable; you will find Mousqueton there; sad our horses, put our pistols into the holsters, and then lead th to the street yonder, so that we may have nothing to do bu mount them. The other arrangements I will look to myse

Porthos did not make the slightest remark, but obeyed w that sublime confidence he always reposed in his friend. merely said:

"Before I start, shall I go into the room where our frie are?"

"No; it is unnecessary."

"Well, then, do me the kindness to get my purse, whic left on the mantelpiece."

"I will see to it."

Porthos walked back to the stable with his usual calm tranquil step, passing through the soldiers, who could not h admiring his lofty figure and powerful limbs, Frenchı though he was. At the corner of the street he met Mousc ton, whom he took back with him.

Then D'Artagnan went in, whistling an air which he begun on Porthos's departure.

"My dear Athos," said he, "I have just been reflecting your arguments, and they have convinced me. I am decide sorry that I have had anything to do with this affair. have said the truth — Mazarin is a low-bred fellow. I therefore resolved to flee with you. No remarks, but h yourself ready. Your swords are in that corner; do forget them; they are instruments that may prove very u ful in our present circumstances. And that, by the w reminds me of Porthos's purse. Good! there it is."

And D'Artagnan put the purse into his pocket; his t friends looked at him in amazement.

"Well, I want to know what there is so astonishing this!" said he. "I was blind, and Athos has made me s *clearly; that is* all. Come here."

two friends went up to him.

› you see that street?" said D'Artagnan. "Your horses
e there presently; you will pass out of the door, then
› the left and leap into your saddles; and that is all.
; trouble yourselves about anything except attending to
;nal. That signal will be when I shall cry out, 'Jésus
ur!'"

ıt you — your word that you will come with us, D'Arta-
" said Athos.

ıwear to you, by the great God" —

is settled," said Aramis. "When you exclaim 'Jésus
ur!' we pass out, we upset any one we find opposing us,
ı to our horses, leap into the saddles, and spur forward.
; it?"

:actly so."

ɔu know, Aramis," said Athos, "I always told you that
ıgnan was the best of us all."

ɔod!" said D'Artagnan. "But a truce to compliments.
ɔe. Adieu!"

ıd you will flee with us, will you not?"

ıdoubtedly. Do not forget the signal — 'Jésus
ur!'"

he went out in the same manner that he entered,
ng, at the very note where he had left off, the air that
; whistling at his entrance.

soldiers were amusing themselves, or sleeping. Two
inging in a corner the psalm, "By the waters of Baby-
ıorribly out of tune.

rtagnan called the sergeant.

ɣ dear sir," said he, "General Cromwell has sent for me
Mordaunt; therefore keep a good watch over the pris-
I beg of you."

sergeant indicated that he did not understand French;
Artagnan then endeavoured to explain by gestures what
ld not make him understand by words.

sergeant made a sign that all was right.

rtagnan proceeded to the stables, and found the five
saddled, his own among the rest.

ch of you take a horse by the bridle," said he to Porthos
ousqueton; "turn to the left, so that Athos and Aramis
ɜe you from their window."

ıey are coming, *then?*" asked Porthos.

"In an instant."

"You did not forget my purse?"

"No; don't worry about that."

"Good."

And Porthos and Mousqueton, each leading a horse, we their post.

D'Artagnan, now alone, struck a steel and ignited a of tinder about twice the size of a lentil; he then mo his horse, and went and stopped him in the midst of th diers, opposite the door. There, patting his horse's nec gently introduced the lighted tinder into his ear.

It was necessary to be as good a horseman as D'Arta to run the risk of such a scheme; for the animal no s began to feel the smart of the burning than he uttered a sc of pain, reared up, and gave a bound as if he had been s with madness.

The soldiers, whom he threatened with destruction, scat precipitately.

"Help! help!" cried D'Artagnan. "Stop him! stop My horse has got the staggers."

In fact, in one moment the blood seemed to be sta from his eyes, and he became white with foam.

"Help! help!" D'Artagnan continued to cry to the sol who dared not come near him: "Help! Are you going me be killed? Jésus Seigneur!"

Scarcely had D'Artagnan uttered this last cry befor door opened, and Athos and Aramis rushed out, sword in Thanks to D'Artagnan's stratagem the road was clear.

"The prisoners are escaping! The prisoners are escapi exclaimed the sergeant.

"Stop them! stop them!" vociferated D'Artagnan, g the rein to his furious horse, which darted forward, over ing three or four of the men.

"Stop! stop!" cried the soldiers, running to their arm

But the prisoners were already in their saddles; and there they lost no time in galloping off toward the ne gate. In the street they perceived Grimaud and Blaisois, were coming to look for their masters.

By a sign Athos made Grimaud understand everything, he instantly put himself on the track of the small troop, appeared like a whirlwind, and which D'Artagnan, who bro *up the rear,* excited yet more by his voice. They pa

ırough the gate like shadows, without the guards even thinking f stopping them, and found themselves in the open country.

In the meantime, the soldiers still kept crying out, "Stop! op!" And the sergeant, who began to discover that he was ıe dupe of a stratagem, was tearing his hair.

While all this was going on, a cavalier was seen coming up ; a gallop, holding a paper in his hand.

It was Mordaunt with the order.

"The prisoners!" he exclaimed, as he leaped from his horse.

The sergeant had not the power to answer him, but pointed the door wide open and the empty room.

Mordaunt rushed to the steps, understood the whole, uttered cry as if something had torn his very entrails, and fell down sensible on the pavement.

CHAPTER LXII.

WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT, IN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, GREAT HEARTS NEVER LOSE THEIR COURAGE OR GOOD STOMACHS THEIR APPETITES.

THE little troop thus proceeded at a gallop, without exchang- g one word, without casting a look behind them; fording a ıall stream, the name of which they did not know; and leav- g on their left a town, which Athos insisted was Durham.

At last they came in sight of a small wood, and directed eir course to it, giving their horses a last prick of the spur.

When they had disappeared behind a screen of verdure ıfficient to hide them from those who might pursue them, ıey stopped to hold a consultation. Their horses were ıtrusted to the two lacqueys, that they might gain their reath, without being unbridled or unsaddled. Grimaud was laced as sentinel.

"In the first place, let me embrace you, D'Artagnan, my riend," said Athos; "you, our saviour,—you who are the rue hero among us."

"Athos is right and I admire you," said Aramis, folding him his arms. "Under an intelligent master, to what might you ot aspire, with that infallible eye, arm of steel, commanding ntellect?"

"Now," said the Gascon, "this is all very well, and I a for myself and Porthos these embraces and thanks; bu have no time to lose. Forward! forward!"

The two friends, recalled by D'Artagnan to what they Porthos, also pressed his hands in turn.

"Now," said Athos, "the main point is for us not to about at hazard like fools, but to devise some plan. Wha we going to do?"

"What are we going to do? Mordieux! that is not dif to tell."

"Tell it then, D'Artagnan."

"We must gain the first seaport, unite all our littl sources, charter a vessel, and sail to France. I will spen last sou for it. The first treasure is life; and ours, it mu confessed, hangs upon a thread."

"What do you say to that, Du Vallon?" inquired Atho

"I?" said Porthos; "I am precisely of D'Artagnan's opi This England is a villainous country."

"You are, then, quite decided upon leaving it?" a Athos of D'Artagnan.

"Sang Diou!" said D'Artagnan; "I do not see what sh keep me in it."

Athos exchanged a look with Aramis. "Go, then, friends," he said, with a sigh.

"What do you mean — 'go'?" asked D'Artagnan · seems to me it is 'let us go.'"

"No," replied Athos — "no, my friend, we must separ

"Separate!" cried D'Artagnan, quite astounded by unexpected declaration.

"Bah!" said Porthos, "why should we separate, now we are together?"

"Because your mission is accomplished, and you ca indeed, you must — return to France; but ours is not ac plished."

"Your mission is not accomplished?" exclaimed D'A gnan, looking at Athos with surprise.

"No, my friend," replied Athos, with his gentle yet f voice; "we came here to defend King Charles; we have fended him badly, and it still remains for us to save hi

"Save the King!" said D'Artagnan, looking now at A mis, as he had before looked at Athos.

Aramis contented himself with giving a nod of assent.

D'Artagnan's countenance assumed an expression of deep compassion; he began to imagine that he was dealing with two madmen.

"You cannot possibly be talking seriously, Athos," said D'Artagnan. "The King is in the midst of an army which is taking him to London. That army is commanded by a butcher, or the son of a butcher, which is much the same thing, — Colonel Harrison. His Majesty will be tried on his arrival in London. I am certain, for I heard quite enough from Cromwell's own lips to make me pretty sure on that point."

Athos and Aramis exchanged a second glance.

"And when once tried, the sentence will not be delayed," continued D'Artagnan. "These Puritans are gentry who can move pretty quickly at a pinch."

"And to what punishment do you think the King will be condemned?" said Athos.

"To the punishment of death, I fear. They have done too much against him to hope that he will pardon them. They have therefore only one alternative, and that is to kill him. Do you not remember Cromwell's remark at Paris, when they showed him the dungeon of Vincennes, where M. de Vendôme was confined?"

"What did he say?" asked Porthos.

"'You should never strike princes except at the head.'"

"I remember it," said Athos.

"And do you believe that he will not follow his own maxim, now that he has possession of the King?"

"Yes, I am even sure of it; and this is only another and more cogent reason why we ought not to abandon the august head thus threatened."

"Athos, you are becoming mad!"

"No, my friend," mildly replied that gentleman; "but De Winter came for us in France, and introduced us to Madame Henrietta. Her Majesty did M. d'Herblay and me the honour to ask our aid for her husband. We gave her our word — our word comprehended everything. We pledged to her our strength, our intellect, — in fine, our life; and we must keep our word. Is that your opinion, D'Herblay?"

"Yes," replied Aramis; "we have promised."

"And then we have also another reason," continued Athos, "and it is this — listen attentively: At the present moment everything is in a low, depressed state in France. We have a

King ten years old, who, as yet, has no will of his own; we have a Queen whom a late-felt passion renders blind; we have a minister who manages France as he would a large farm — that is to say, only thinking of what gold he can squeeze from it by working it with Italian intrigue and craft: we have princes who oppose him from selfish motives, and who will effect nothing more than to extract from Mazarin a few ingots of gold or a few bribes of place. I served them, not from enthusiasm (for God knows that I estimate them at their value, and that value is not, in my estimation, very great), but from principle. Here the case is wholly different; here I have encountered a lofty, a regal, an European misfortune, and I attach myself to it. Should we succeed in saving the King, it will be a splendid achievement: should we die for him, it will be a noble death."

"Therefore you are convinced beforehand that you will perish?" said D'Artagnan.

"We fear it; and our only regret is that we shall die far from you."

"But what can you do in a foreign and hostile country?"

"When young, I travelled in England. I speak English like a native, and Aramis also knows something of the language. Ah! if we had but you with us, my friends; with you, D'Artagnan, with you, Porthos, — all again reunited after a separation of twenty years, — we could make head, not only against England, but against the three kingdoms."

"And did you promise this Queen," replied D'Artagnan sarcastically, "to storm the Tower of London, to kill a hundred thousand soldiers, to struggle successfully against the will of a whole nation, and the ambition of such a man as Cromwell? You have not seen that man, Athos, nor have you, Aramis. He is a man of genius, who greatly reminded me of our Cardinal — the other — the great Cardinal — you know whom I mean. Do not, therefore, exaggerate what you conceive to be your duty. In the name of Heaven, my dear Athos, do not create for yourself a futile devotion. When I look at you I believe that I see a rational being; but when you speak I imagine that I hear a madman. Come, Porthos, declare your opinion. What do you think of all this? Speak frankly."

"No good!" replied Porthos.

"*Come, now*," continued D'Artagnan, annoyed on perceiving

that Athos, instead of listening to him, appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts, "never did you find yourself injured by my advice. Well, then, believe me, Athos, your mission is terminated — terminated nobly; come back to France with us."

"My friend," said Athos, "our resolution is immovable."

"Then you must have some other motive, of which we are unapprised."

Athos smiled.

D'Artagnan slapped his thigh with anger, and muttered the most convincing arguments he could imagine; but to all these Athos contented himself with merely replying by a calm and gentle smile, and Aramis by a motion of his head.

"Well, then!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, furious, "well, then, since you wish it, let us leave our bones in this beggarly country, where it is always cold — where the fine weather is a perpetual mist, mist is rain, and rain a complete deluge — where the sun is like the moon, and the moon is like a cream cheese. In fact, since we must die, what matters it whether we die here or elsewhere?"

"Except, my dear friend," said Athos, "that it is to die sooner."

"Bah! a little sooner or a little later is not worth arguing about."

"What astonishes me," said Porthos sententiously, "is that we are not dead yet."

"Never fear, Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "that will soon be. So now it is agreed upon," continued the Gascon, "and if Porthos does not object" —

"I?" said Porthos; "I will do just what you like. Besides, I admire all that the Comte de la Fère said just now."

"But your future prospects, D'Artagnan? And your ambition, Porthos?"

"Our future prospects — our ambition!" said D'Artagnan, with a feverish volubility; "must we think about them when we are saving the King? When the King is saved, we assemble his friends, we beat the Puritans, we reconquer England, we reënter London with him, we replace him firmly on the throne" —

"And he makes us lords and dukes," said Porthos, his eyes sparkling with delight, even at the idea of this visionary prospect.

"Or — he forgets us," said D'Artagnan.

"Oh!" exclaimed Porthos.

"Forsooth, such a thing has happened, friend Porthos; methinks we formerly performed a service for the Queen, Anne of Austria, that was not much inferior to the one we now wish to perform for Charles I.; which did not, however, prevent Anne of Austria from forgetting us for twenty years."

"Well, D'Artagnan," said Athos, "notwithstanding this, are you sorry that you rendered her that service?"

"No, by my faith," replied D'Artagnan; "and I even confess that at those times when I find myself in the worst humour I find consolation from that recollection."

"You see, then, D'Artagnan, that though princes are often ungrateful, God never is."

"See here, Athos," said D'Artagnan, "I verily believe that if you should encounter by chance Satan here on earth, you would manage so well that you would take him up to heaven with you."

"So then" — said Athos, holding out his hand to D'Artagnan.

"So then 't is agreed," said D'Artagnan. "I find England a charming country, and I remain here; but on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That I am not compelled to learn English."

"Very well. Now I swear to you, my friend," said Athos, in great elation, "by that God who hears us, by my name, which I think is spotless, that I believe there is a power watches over us, and I entertain a hope that we shall all four see France again."

"So be it," said D'Artagnan; "but I confess that my conviction is precisely the reverse."

"This dear D'Artagnan," said Aramis, "represents among us that parliamentary opposition which always says *no* and always acts *yes*."

"Yes; but which, after all, saves the country," said Athos.

"Well, now that everything is settled," said Porthos, rubbing his hands, "suppose we think of dinner? I believe that, in the most critical situations of our lives, we have always dined."

"Ah! yes, indeed. But it is useless to talk of dinner in a country where for every feast they eat boiled mutton, and for *their greatest* treat they drink beer. Why did you come into

:h a country, Athos? Ah, pardon me!" added D'Artagnan, iling, "I forgot that you are no longer Athos. But never nd; let us hear your plan for dinner, Porthos."
"My plan?"
"Yes; have you a plan?"
"No; I have only an appetite."
"Pardieu, if that's all, I have one also. But it is not ough to have an appetite; we must find something to eat, less we munch some grass, like our horses" —
"Ah!" said Aramis, who was not so much detached from :thly things as Athos, "when we were at Parpaillot, do you nember what beautiful oysters we used to eat?"
"And the legs of mutton from the salt marshes," added rthos, smacking his lips.
"But," said D'Artagnan, "have we not our friend Mousque- ı, who made you live so well at Chantilly, Porthos?"
"Yes, we have Mousqueton," said Porthos; "but since he :ame steward he has become mighty stupid. Never mind, us call him."
And, to ensure his answering pleasantly:
"Eh! Mouston," said Porthos.
Mouston made his appearance; his face was very doleful.
"What is the matter with you, my dear Monsieur Mous- ı?" said D'Artagnan. "Are you ill?"
"Sir, I am very hungry," replied Mousqueton.
"Well, it is precisely on that account we called you, my ar Monsieur Mouston. Could you not catch us some fine tle rabbits and some charming partridges, like those of ıich you made fricassees and the salmis at the Hôtel de — ıith, I cannot remember the name of the hôtel!"
"At the Hôtel de — By my faith!" said Porthos, "neither ın I remember the name of that hôtel."
"No matter. And, by the lasso, some of those bottles of d Burgundy which so quickly cured your master's sprain?"
"Alas, sir," said Mousqueton, "I am afraid that all you sk of me is very scarce in this frightful country; and I think hat we should do better if we went and asked hospitality from the master of a small house that may be seen on the skirts of the wood."
"What! Is there a house near?" inquired D'Artagnan.
"Yes, sir," replied Mousqueton.
"Well, then, *as you say*, we will go and request some

dinner from the master of that house. Gentlemen, what do you say to this? Does not M. Mouston's advice seem full of sense?"

"Ah!" said Aramis; "but should the master be a Puritan?"

"So much the better, mordioux!" said D'Artagnan. "Should he be a Puritan, we will inform him of the King's capture, and for this news he will give us some of his white chickens."

"But should he be a Cavalier?" said Porthos.

"In that case we will put on a melancholy look, and he will give us his black chickens."

"You are a happy fellow," said Athos, laughing, in spite of himself, at the indomitable Gascon's sally, "for you always look on the sunny side of everything."

"No wonder," said D'Artagnan, "for I come from a country where there is not a cloud in the sky."

"That is not the case here," said Porthos, stretching out his hand to make himself sure whether a sensation of coolness that he had just felt was really caused by a drop of rain.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, "another reason that we should go on. Hallo, Grimaud!"

Grimaud made his appearance.

"Well, Grimaud, my friend, have you seen anything?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Nothing," replied Grimaud.

"Those weak fools have not even pursued us," said Porthos. "Oh, if we had been in their place!"

"And they were wrong," said D'Artagnan. "I would willingly exchange two words with Mordaunt in this little Thebaid. What a pretty place to lay a man neatly on the earth!"

"Decidedly," said Aramis. "I believe, gentlemen, that the son has not his mother's energy."

"Ah, my dear friend," replied Athos, "wait a little! It is scarcely two hours since we left him, and he does not yet know in what direction we have gone or where we are. It will be time enough to say that he is weaker than his mother when we plant our feet on the soil of France, unless before that we are either murdered or poisoned."

"Nevertheless, in the meantime let us dine," said Porthos.

"*Faith, yes*," said Athos, "for I am monstrous hungry."

ıember the black chickens!" said Aramis.
.he four friends, led by Mousqueton, proceeded toward
.se. They were already restored to their habitual indifference; for, as Athos had said, they were now reunited, and of the same mind.

CHAPTER LXIII.

HEALTH TO FALLEN MAJESTY.

ıey approached the house, our fugitives observed that ınd was much trodden, as if a considerable body of :n had preceded them. Before the door these traces en more visible; this troop, whatever it might be, had here.
dieu!" said D'Artagnan, "the thing is clear enough; ıg and his escort have passed here."
ble!" cried Porthos; "in that case, they will have d everything."
ı!" said D'Artagnan, "they must have left a chicken."
he leaped from his horse and knocked at the door, but ınswered.
ıen pushed open the door, which was not fastened, · that the first room was empty and deserted.
ll?" said Porthos.
.n see no one," said D'Artagnan. "Aha!"
at?"
)d!"
is word the three friends leaped from their horses and the first room; but D'Artagnan had already opened · of the second, and, by the expression of his counte- t was clear that he beheld some extraordinary object.
:hree friends approached, and perceived a man lying floor, and bathed in a pool of blood.
ıs evident that he had tried to reach his bed, but, ngth failing him, he had fallen before he could accom-

ɜ was the first who approached this unfortunate man; ght that he saw him move.
ll?" exclaimed *D'Artagnan*.

"Well, if he is dead," said Athos, "he has not been long, for he is still warm. But no; his heart beats! friend!"

The wounded man heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan took so water in the hollow of his hand and threw it into his face.

The man opened his eyes, made an effort to raise his he and fell back again.

Athos then tried to raise him on his knee; but he percei that the wound was a little above the neck, and had laid o the back part of the skull; the blood was flowing copiously

Aramis dipped a cloth in water and spread it over wound. The coolness revived the sufferer, who opened eyes a second time.

He looked with astonishment at these men, who appeared pity and were trying to assist him as far as they could.

"You are among friends," said Athos, in English; " aside your fears, and, if you have strength enough, tell what has happened."

"The King," murmured the wounded man — "the King i prisoner."

"Did you see him?" inquired Aramis, in the same langua

The man did not answer.

"Do not be afraid," said Athos; "we are his Majest faithful followers."

"Is what you tell me true?" asked the wounded man.

"On our honour as gentlemen."

"Then I may tell you everything?"

"Speak."

"I am the brother of Parry, the King's valet-de-chambre.

Athos and Aramis remembered that this was the name which De Winter had addressed the lacquey whom they fou in the passage of the royal tent.

"We know him," said Athos; "he never left the King."

"Yes, that is true," said the wounded man. "Well, th the King being a captive, he thought of me, and in passi this house he requested them, in the King's name, to st here. The request was granted. The King, they said, w hungry; and they brought him into this room that he mig take some refreshment. Sentinels were stationed at the do and windows. Parry knew this room; for while his Majes was at Newcastle he had many times come to see me. I *knew that in* this room there was a trap-door, that this tra

ır led to the cellar, and that from this cellar they could ch the orchard. He made me a sign, I understood it, but ıbtless this sign was detected by the King's guards, and ited their distrust. Ignorant of their suspicions, I had y one wish, which was to save the King. So I went out on tence of looking for some wood, and thinking that no time ɜ to be lost, I entered the subterranean passage that led to cellar with which this trap-door communicated. I lifted the board with my head; and while Parry gently secured bolt of the door, I made a sign to the King to follow me. ıs! he did not wish to do so; it seemed as if this kind of ht was repugnant to him. But Parry clasped his hands in ɔplication, and I also implored him not to lose such an ɔortunity. At last he made up his mind to follow me. Forately, I walked first; the King was some paces behind . Suddenly I beheld something like a great shadow start I wished to cry out, to warn the King, but had not time. ɜlt a blow, as if the whole house had fallen on my head, l fell insensible."

'Good and loyal Englishman! Faithful servant!" exclaimed ıos.

'When I recovered my senses, I was lying on the same t. I dragged myself to the courtyard; the King and his ɔrt were gone. It took me about an hour to crawl from the d to this place; but here my strength failed me, and I ame insensible a second time."

'And how do you feel now?"

'Very ill," replied the wounded man.

'Can we do anything for you?" said Athos.

'Help me to get into bed; that will give me some relief, I ak."

'Will there be any one to assist you?"

'My wife is at Durham, and will be back any moment. t do you need anything — do you want anything?"

'We came to ask you for something to eat."

'Alas! they have taken everything, and there is not a morof bread left in the house."

"Do you hear, D'Artagnan?" said Athos; "we must look : our dinner elsewhere."

"I do not care about it now," said D'Artagnan; "I am no ıger hungry."

"Faith, nor I either," said Porthos.

They carried the man to his bed, and called for Grimaud, who dressed the wound. Grimaud had, in the service of the four friends, had so many occasions to make lint and compresses that he had acquired some smattering of surgery.

In the meantime the fugitives had returned to the front room, and were holding a consultation.

"Now," said Aramis, "we know what we are about. The King and his escort have really passed this way. We must take an opposite direction. Is that your opinion, Athos?"

Athos did not answer; he was reflecting.

"Yes," said Porthos, "let us take an opposite direction. If we follow the escort we shall find everything devoured, and shall die of hunger. What a cursed country this England is! It is the first time that I ever went without my dinner. Dinner is my principal meal."

"What do you think, D'Artagnan?" said Athos; "are you of Aramis's opinion?"

"No," said D'Artagnan; "my opinion is diametrically opposed to it."

"What! Would you follow the escort?" said Porthos, in alarm.

"No, but pursue the journey with them."

Athos's eyes sparkled with joy.

"Journey with the escort!" cried Aramis.

"Let D'Artagnan explain himself," said Athos. "You know that he excels in giving good advice."

"There is no sort of doubt," said D'Artagnan, "that our best plan is to go where they would not think of looking for us. Now, they will have no idea of looking for us among the Puritans. Let us join the Puritans!"

"Excellent advice, my friend," said Athos. "I was just going to propose it when you anticipated me."

"So that is your opinion, is it?" said Aramis.

"Yes, they will think that we wish to leave England, and will seek us at the seaports. In the meantime, we shall reach London with the King. Once in London and we are undiscoverable; in the midst of a million there is no difficulty in concealment; without taking into consideration," continued Athos, "the chances that may offer themselves on the road."

"Yes," said Aramis, "I understand."

"*I do not* understand," said Porthos. "But never mind;

ıce this is the opinion of both Athos and D'Artagnan, it ıst be the best."

"But," said Aramis, "shall we not be suspected by Colonel arrison?"

"Eh! mordioux!" said D'Artagnan, "he is the only man whom I depend. Colonel Harrison is one of our friends; ɜ saw him twice at Cromwell's. He knows that we were nt from France by Mazarin, and so he will consider us as ımrades. Besides, is he not a butcher's son? Well, then, ɔrthos will teach him how to knock down an ox with a blow his fist; and I how to overthrow a bull by taking him by e horns. That will secure his confidence."

Athos smiled.

"You are the very best companion that I know, D'Arta-ıan," said he, holding out his hand to him; "and I am very ppy that I have again found you, my dear son."

This, as we know, was the term that Athos always applied D'Artagnan when his heart overflowed.

At this moment Grimaud came from the inner room. He d dressed the man's wound, and had left him much relieved.

The four friends took leave of him and inquired if he had y commission to give them for his brother.

"Tell him," said the worthy fellow, "to inform the King at they did not quite kill me; for, humble as I am, I am sure at the King is sorry for me, and reproaches himself as the use of my death."

"Be assured," said D'Artagnan, "that the King shall know before the evening."

The little troop resumed its journey. There was no mistak-g the road; that which they followed was sufficiently traced ross the plain. At the end of two hours' silent ride, D'Arta-ıan, who led the party, stopped at a turn of the road.

"Aha!" said he, "here they are!"

In fact, about half a mile in advance, they saw a consider-ɔle body of horsemen.

"My dear friends," said D'Artagnan, "give your swords to l. Mouston, who will return them to you at the proper time nd place; and do not forget that you are our prisoners."

Putting their horses, which began to be fatigued, into a trot, hey soon joined the escort.

The King, placed in front, and surrounded by a party of Harrison's troopers, was proceeding with an unmoved coun-

tenance, always dignified, and with a sort of resigned willingness.

On seeing Athos and Aramis, of whom he had not been allowed to take leave, — on reading in their looks that he had still some friends near him, although he thought that these friends were prisoners, — a flush of pleasure mantled the King's pale cheeks.

D'Artagnan rode up to the head of the column, leaving his friends under the guard of Porthos. He went straight to Harrison, who recollected having seen him with Cromwell, and received him as politely as a man of his condition and character could receive any one. As D'Artagnan had anticipated, the Colonel had no suspicion.

Their next halt was at the place where the King was to dine. But this time every precaution was taken that he might not attempt to escape. In the principal room of the inn a small table was placed for him, and a larger one for the officers.

"Will you dine with me?" said Harrison to D'Artagnan.

"Diable!" said D'Artagnan, "it would give me great pleasure; but I have a companion, M. du Vallon, and my two prisoners, whom I cannot leave, and who would crowd your table. But let us do a better thing: set a table for us in one corner, and send us what you can spare from your own; for, without that, we run the risk of dying of hunger. We shall still be dining together, as we dine in the same room."

"Very good!" said Harrison.

The matter was arranged as D'Artagnan proposed; and when he rejoined the Colonel he found the King seated at his little table, attended by Parry, Harrison, and his officers at the larger table, and places reserved for him and his comrades in a corner.

The table at which the Puritan officers were seated was round, and, either by chance or from a brutal design, Harrison turned his back on the King.

The King saw the four gentlemen come in, but appeared to take no notice of them.

They took their seats at the table reserved for them, and placed themselves in such a manner as to turn their backs on no one. They had, in front of them, the officers' table, and also the King's.

Harrison, to honour his guests, sent some of the best dishes

eir table. Unfortunately for the four friends, there was
ine. To Athos this was quite immaterial; but D'Arta-
, Porthos, and Aramis made wry faces every time they
to swallow beer, that Puritan beverage.
Faith, Colonel," said D'Artagnan, "we are very grateful to
for your polite invitation; for had it not been for you we
ld have run the risk of going without our dinner, as we
without our breakfast; and here is my friend, M. du
on, who shares my gratitude, for he was desperately
ry."
I am hungry still," said Porthos, bowing to Harrison.
And how did it happen that you went without your break-
?" asked Harrison, laughing.
For a very simple reason, Colonel," replied D'Artagnan.
was in great haste to join you; and, to accomplish it, I
the same road that you did, which, old forager as I am,
ght not to have done, knowing well enough that nothing
d be left where a good and hearty regiment like yours
passed. We halted at a pretty little house, situated on
edge of a wood, and which, from a distance, with its red-
roof and green shutters, had such a smiling appearance
it was quite a pleasure to look at it; but you may imag-
our disappointment when, instead of finding there the
kens that we were ready to roast, and legs of mutton
h we calculated on grilling, we saw nothing but a poor
l bathed — Ah! mordiou, Colonel, make my respects to
officer of yours who gave that blow; it was well given
ed — so well that it even excited the admiration of my
d, M. du Vallon, who also gives blows with great neat-
."
Yes," said Harrison, laughing, and looking at an officer
ed at the table, "when Groslow undertakes that sort of
, there is no need of coming after him."
Ah, it was that gentleman?" said D'Artagnan, bowing to
officer. "I regret that he does not speak French, that I
ht pay him a compliment upon it."
I am quite ready to receive and to return it, sir," said the
er, in pretty good French; "for I lived in Paris for three
s."
Well then, sir, I am anxious to tell you," continued D'Ar-
an, "that the blow was so well applied that you almost
ed your man."

"I thought that I had quite killed him," said Groslow.

"No. It was a pretty close call, it is true; but he is not dead."

And, in saying these words, D'Artagnan glanced at Parry, who, pale and motionless, was standing near the King, to let him know that this news was intended for him.

The King had listened to this conversation with indescribable anguish; he did not know what the French officer was going to say, and these cruel particulars, related in a tone of careless indifference, greatly revolted him.

But at the last words only he breathed freely.

"Ah! diable!" said Groslow; "I thought I had succeeded better; and if it were not so far to the house of that wretch, I would return to finish him."

"And you would do well, if you fear his recovery," said D'Artagnan; "for you know that wounds on the head, if they are not immediately mortal, are generally cured in the space of a week."

And D'Artagnan glanced a second time at Parry, over whose countenance such an expression of joy was diffused that Charles stretched out his hand to him, smiling.

Parry bent over his master's hand, and respectfully kissed it.

"Really," whispered Athos to D'Artagnan, "you are a man of honour and a man of talent. But what do you think of the King?"

"His face much pleases me," said D'Artagnan; "he has an expression at once noble and good."

"Yes, but he allowed himself to be taken," said Porthos; "that was wrong."

"I have a desire to drink the King's health," said Athos.

"Then let me propose his health," said D'Artagnan.

"Do so," said Aramis.

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan, astounded by the resources that his Gascon wit incessantly supplied to his comrade.

D'Artagnan took his tin goblet, filled it, and rose.

"Gentlemen," said he to his companions, "let us drink, if you please, to him who presides over this repast — to our Colonel, and let him understand that we are entirely at his service, to London or beyond it."

And as D'Artagnan looked at Harrison while he was speaking, Harrison believed that the toast was intended for him. He therefore rose up and bowed to the four friends, who, with

their eyes fixed on the King, drank together; while Harrison emptied his goblet without suspicion.

Charles, on his part, held out his glass to Parry, who poured into it some drops of beer — for the King was restricted to the same beverage as the others; then putting it to his lips, and looking toward the four gentlemen, he drank, with a smile full of dignity and gratitude.

"Come, gentlemen, we must move," said Harrison, setting down his glass, and without evincing any consideration for the illustrious prisoner he was conducting.

"Where do we sleep, Colonel?"

"At Thirsk," replied Harrison.

"Parry," said the King, rising and turning to his valet, "my horse; I wish to go to Thirsk."

"Faith," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "your King has truly won my heart, and I am entirely at his service."

"If what you say is sincere," replied Athos, "he will not reach London."

"How so?"

"Why, because we shall have carried him off before he gets there."

"Really," said D'Artagnan, "upon my honour, Athos, you are mad."

"Why, have you devised any plan?" asked Aramis.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "the thing would not be impossible, provided we had but a good plan of action."

"I have none," said Athos; "but D'Artagnan will find one."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders, and they resumed their journey.

CHAPTER LXIV.

D'ARTAGNAN FINDS A PLAN.

Athos knew D'Artagnan better perhaps than D'Artagnan knew himself. He was aware that just as it is sufficient to drop a seed into a strong and fertile soil, all it needed was to let an idea fall into the Gascon's adventurous mind. He had therefore quietly let his friend shrug his shoulders, and had continued his route, talking with him about Raoul, a subject of

conversation which, it will be remembered, he had completely avoided on another occasion.

At the close of the day they reached Thirsk. The four friends appeared perfectly indifferent to the precautions taken to secure the King's person. They retired to a private house; and as they had constant fears on their own account, they established themselves in one room, taking care to secure a means of retreat in case of attack. The lacqueys were stationed at different points; Grimaud slept on a bundle of straw across the doorway.

D'Artagnan was thoughtful, and, for a time, appeared to have lost his customary loquacity. He did not say a word, but whistled incessantly, and kept wandering from his bed to the window. Porthos, who never saw further than the outside of things, talked as usual. D'Artagnan answered him by monosyllables. Athos and Aramis looked at each other with a smile.

The journey had been fatiguing; and yet, with the exception of Porthos, whose sleep was as faithful as his appetite, the friends slept badly.

The next morning D'Artagnan was up first. He had already gone down to the stables, he had examined the horses, he had given all the necessary orders for the day, even before Athos and Aramis were up, and while Porthos was still snoring.

At eight in the morning they resumed their journey in the same order as on the previous day; only D'Artagnan left his friends to ride together, while he went forward to renew the acquaintance begun the evening before with M. Groslow, who, flattered by D'Artagnan's eulogiums, received him most graciously.

"Really, sir," said D'Artagnan to him, "I am most fortunate in finding some one with whom I may talk my poor language. M. du Vallon, my friend, is of a very melancholy temperament, so that it is difficult to extract four words a day from him; and as for our two prisoners, you may imagine that they are not in a good mood for conversation."

"They are violent Royalists," said Groslow.

"Another reason for their pouting at us because we have taken the Stuart, whom, by the by, I hope you mean incontinently to bring to trial."

"Forsooth!" said Groslow, "we are taking him to London for that very purpose."

"*And* you will not lose sight of him, I presume?"

"No, indeed! You may perceive," added the officer, laughing, "that he has truly a regal escort."

"Oh! during the day there is no danger of his escaping; but at night" —

"During the night our precautions are redoubled."

"What mode do you adopt, so as to ensure keeping him?"

"Eight men remain constantly in his room."

"Diable!" said D'Artagnan; "he is well guarded. But, besides these eight men, no doubt you place a guard outside? Too great precautions cannot be taken against such a prisoner."

"Oh, no. Only consider: what could two unarmed men do against eight men with arms?"

"What do you mean? Two men?"

"Yes, the King and his valet de chambre."

"Then you allow his valet to remain with him?"

"Yes; Stuart requested this favour, and Colonel Harrison granted it; pretending that he is King, it seems that he cannot dress and undress himself without assistance."

"Really, Captain," said D'Artagnan, resolved to continue the system of laudation that had succeeded so well, "the more I listen to you, the more astonished I am at the easy and elegant manner in which you speak French. You lived three years in Paris, you say. Well, I might pass all my life in London, I am quite sure, without reaching the perfection that you have acquired. What did you do in Paris?"

"My father, who is a merchant, placed me with his agent, who, in return, sent his son to my father; it is a custom among merchants to make such exchanges."

"And were you pleased with Paris, sir?"

"Yes. But you sadly want a revolution, like our own; but against your King, who is a mere child, but against that cardinally Italian, who is your Queen's lover."

"Ah! I am quite of your opinion, sir; and it could soon be managed if we had only a dozen officers, like yourself, without prejudices, vigilant, and incorruptible. Ah! we should soon settle that Mazarin, and treat him with a nice little trial, like that you are going to give your King."

"But," said the officer, "I thought that you were in his service, and that he sent you to General Cromwell?"

"That is to say, I am in the King's service; and knowing that he wanted to send some one into England, I applied for

the mission, so great was my desire to become acquainted with the great man who at present governs the three kingdoms. So, when he proposed to M. du Vallon and myself to draw our swords in honour of Old England, you saw how we jumped at the proposition."

"Yes, I know that you charged by the side of M. Mordaunt."

"On his right and left, sir. Peste! that is a brave and excellent young man. How he doubled up his uncle! Did you see it?"

"Do you know him?" demanded the officer.

"Yes, well; I may even say that we are very intimate. M. du Vallon and I came from France with him."

"It seems that you kept him waiting a long time at Boulogne."

"What would you have?" said D'Artagnan. "Like you, I was guarding a king."

"Aha!" said Groslow; "what king?"

"Ours, by Jove! The little King Louis XIV."

And D'Artagnan took off his hat. The Englishman did the same.

"And how long did you guard him?"

"Three nights; and, by my faith, I shall always remember those three nights with pleasure."

"So, then, the young King is very amiable?"

"The King? He was sleeping like a top."

"What do you mean, then?"

"I mean that my friends, the officers of the Guards and Musketeers, came to bear me company, and that we passed our nights in drinking and dicing."

"Ah, yes!" said the Englishman, with a sigh; "it is true, you Frenchmen are jolly companions."

"Do you not play, then, when you are on guard?"

"Never," replied the Englishman.

"In that case you must be monstrously tired, and I pity you," said D'Artagnan.

"The fact is," replied the officer, "that I see my turn come round with a certain terror. A whole night is a dreadful long time to watch."

"Yes, when one watches alone, with a parcel of stupid soldiers; but when one watches with a pleasant comrade, and the gold and the dice roll along the table, the night passes like *a dream.* Can it be that you do not like dicing?"

"Quite the contrary."

"Lansquenet, for instance?"

"I am passionately fond of it; I played it almost every night in France."

"And since your return to England?"

"I have not touched a dice-box or a card."

"I pity you!" said D'Artagnan, with an air of deep compassion.

"Listen," said the Englishman: "do one thing for me?"

"What is that?"

"To-morrow I am on guard."

"Over the Stuart?"

"Yes. Come and spend the night with me?"

"Impossible!"

"Impossible?"

"Yes, altogether impossible."

"Why so?"

"Every night I play with M. du Vallon. Sometimes we do not even go to bed; this morning, for instance, we were playing till daylight."

"Well, what then?"

"He would not know what to do, if I did not play with him."

"Is he a good player?"

"I have seen him lose two thousand pistoles, laughing till the tears came."

"Then bring him with you."

"How can I do that with our prisoners?"

"Ah, the deuce, that 's true!" said the officer. "But make your lacqueys guard them."

"Yes, that they may escape!" said D'Artagnan. "I have no guards."

"They are men of rank, then, since you take such care of them."

"Yes, indeed. One is a rich nobleman of Touraine; the other, a Knight of Malta, of a high family. We have settled their ransom — two thousand pounds sterling, on reaching France. So we are unwilling to leave men whom our lacqueys know to be millionaires. We have pretty well searched their pockets since we took them; and I will confess to you that it is their money that M. du Vallon and myself keep handling every night. But they may have concealed from us some jewels, *some* valuable diamond; so that we are like

misers who do not leave their treasure. We have constituted ourselves permanent guardians of our men, and when I sleep M. du Vallon watches."

"Aha!" said Groslow.

"So now you understand why I am compelled to refuse your polite invitation, for which I am the more grateful as nothing is so tiresome as always to play with the same person. The chances always balance each other, and at the end of a month, one finds that nothing has been done."

"Ah!" said Groslow, with a sigh, "there is one thing still more tiresome, and that is, never to play at all."

"I can well understand that," said D'Artagnan.

"But let us see," said the Englishman; "are these two men of yours dangerous?"

"In what respect?"

"Are they likely to attempt an escape?"

D'Artagnan burst out laughing.

"Jésus Dieu!" he exclaimed; "one of them has a shaking fever, because he can't get used to the charming country you live in; and the other, although a Knight of Malta, is as timid as a young girl. Then besides, for greater security, we have even deprived them of their clasp knives and pocket scissors."

"Well, then, bring them with you."

"Do you really wish it?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes; I have eight men with me."

"And what then?"

"Four shall guard them and four shall guard the King."

"Why, the affair might be managed in that manner," said D'Artagnan; "though it would be giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Bah! Come anyway; you shall see how I will arrange it all."

"Oh! I do not disturb myself about that," said D'Artagnan; "I would trust such a man as you are with my eyes blindfolded."

This last dose of flattery extracted from the officer one of those little laughs of satisfaction that make friends of those who excite them, for they are the ebullitions of gratified vanity.

"But," said D'Artagnan, "I have been thinking what there is to hinder our beginning this very evening."

"*What?*"

"Our play."

"Nothing in the world," said Groslow.

"Well, then, come this evening to us, and to-morrow we will return your visit. Should you feel any distrust of our two men, who, as you know, are violent Royalists, why then there will be nothing more to say about it; you will, at any rate, have passed a pleasant evening."

"Excellent! This evening at your house; to-morrow at the Stuart's; the day after at mine."

"And the other days in London. Eh, Mordiou!" exclaimed D'Artagnan; "you see that one may pass a pleasant life anywhere."

"Yes, when one meets Frenchmen, and such Frenchmen as you are," said Groslow.

"And as to M. du Vallon — you will see what a merry fellow he is! He is a terrible Frondeur; a man who came near killing Mazarin in the house one day. They employ him because they fear him."

"Yes," said Groslow, "he has a fine figure; and, though I do not know him, he greatly pleases me."

"It will be another story when you know him. But hark! He is calling me. Pardon me; we are so united that he cannot do without me. Will you excuse me?"

"How is it settled, then?"

"For this evening" —

"At your lodgings?"

"Yes."

The two men saluted, and D'Artagnan returned to his companions.

"What the plague can you have been saying to that bulldog?" asked Porthos.

"My dear friend, do not speak in that manner of M. Groslow; he is one of my most intimate friends."

"One of your friends!" said Porthos; "that murderer of peasants!"

"Hush! my dear Porthos. Certainly he is! Although M. Groslow is certainly a little sharp, yet I have found that he has two good qualities — he is a blockhead and he is vain."

Porthos opened his astonished eyes. Athos and Aramis looked at each other with a smile; they knew D'Artagnan, and were well assured that he never did anything without a motive.

"But," continued D'Artagnan, "you will judge of him yourselves."

"How so?"

"I am going to introduce him to you this evening. He is coming to play with me."

"Oho!" said Porthos, whose eyes sparkled at these words; "and is he rich?"

"He is the son of one of the first merchants in London."

"And does he know lansquenet?"

"He adores it."

"And basset?"

"It is his hobby."

"Biribi?"

"He is most skilful at it."

"Good," said Porthos; "we shall pass a most agreeable evening."

"The more agreeable as it is the prelude to one still more so."

"How is that?"

"Why, we entertain him this evening; and to-morrow he is to entertain us."

"Where?"

"I will tell you. But in the meantime let us attend to one thing only, and that is, to receive worthily the honour that M. Groslow pays us. This evening we shall stop at Derby. Let Mousqueton go forward; and if there is only one bottle of wine in the whole town, let him buy it. Nor would it be amiss if he also prepared a good supper; of which, however, you must not partake, Athos, because you have a fever; nor you, Aramis, because you are a Knight of Malta; and let the proceedings of such old campaigners as we are much displease you and make you blush. Do you hear all this?"

"Yes," said Porthos, "but the devil take me if I can understand it."

"Porthos, my friend, you must know that I descend from the prophets on my father's side, and from the sibyls on my mother's, so that I speak only in parables and enigmas. Let those that have ears hear, and those that have eyes look. I can say no more at present."

"Go ahead, my friend," said Athos; "I am quite sure that what you do will be well done."

"*And* are you of the same opinion, Aramis?"

"Quite so, my dear D'Artagnan."

"Very well," said D'Artagnan; "you are true believers, and ere is some pleasure in working miracles for you. You are ıt like that incredulous Porthos, who always wants to see and ɐl in order to believe."

"The fact is," said Porthos, with a shrewd look, "I am ry sceptical."

D'Artagnan gave him a slap on the shoulder; and as they ·re just arriving at the place where they were to dine, the ıversation ended.

About five o'clock in the afternoon they sent Mousqueton ·ward, as had been arranged. Mousqueton could not speak ıglish; but since he had been in England, he had remarked ıt Grimaud by his practice in signs had made them take ɐ place of speech. So he had studied gestures with Gri- ıud, and after some few lessons, thanks to the master's supe- ·rity, he had acquired some skill. Blaisois accompanied n.

The four friends, as they went down the principal street Derby, saw Blaisois standing at the door of a handsome- ɔking house; their quarters were ready for them there.

During the whole day they had not gone near the King, for ır of exciting suspicions; and instead of dining at Colonel ırrison's table, as they had done on the previous day, they ıed by themselves.

Groslow came at the hour appointed, and D'Artagnan re- ıved him as if he had been a friend of twenty years' stand- ʒ. Porthos measured him from top to toe, and smiled on rceiving that, in spite of the blow he had given to Parry's ɔther, he was not equal in strength. Athos and Aramis did they could to conceal the disgust that his coarse and brutal ınners inspired.

In fine, Groslow seemed satisfied with his reception.

Athos and Aramis kept up their characters. At midnight ɐy retired to their chamber, the door of which was left open ıder pretence of goodwill. Besides, D'Artagnan accompanied ɐm, leaving Porthos engaged with Groslow.

Porthos won fifty pistoles from Groslow, and came to the ıclusion, after he was gone, that his company was much ıre agreeable than he had at first expected.

Groslow promised himself, on the morrow, to revenge on Artagnan the check he had received from Porthos, and left

the Gascon, reminding him of the appointment for the evening.

We say the evening, for the players separated at four in the morning.

The day passed as usual. D'Artagnan went from Groslow to Colonel Harrison, and from Colonel Harrison to his friends. To any one who did not know him, D'Artagnan appeared to be in his usual state of mind. To his friends — that is to say, to Athos and Aramis — his gayety appeared feverish.

"What can he be planning?" queried Aramis.

"Let us wait," replied Athos.

Porthos said nothing; he only counted one after the other in his fob, with an air of satisfaction betrayed in his face, the fifty pistoles that he had won from Groslow.

On reaching Ryston in the evening, D'Artagnan assembled his friends. His face had lost that expression of careless gayety it had worn as a mask all the day. Athos pressed Aramis's hand.

"Is the moment at hand?" he said.

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, who had heard him, — "yes, the moment is at hand. This night, gentlemen, we save the King."

Athos started; his eyes sparkled. "D'Artagnan," said he, doubt succeeding his hopes, "this is no joke, is it? It would hurt me too much."

"It is strange, Athos," replied D'Artagnan, "that you should distrust me in this manner. Where and when did you find me jest with a friend's heart or a king's life? I have said to you, and I repeat it, that this night we save King Charles. You relied on me to find some means: the means is found."

Porthos looked at D'Artagnan with a feeling of profound admiration; Aramis smiled like a man full of hope; Athos was deadly pale and trembled in all his limbs.

"Speak," said Athos.

Porthos opened his eyes wide; Aramis hung, as it were, on D'Artagnan's lips.

"We are invited to spend the evening with M. Groslow; you are aware of that?"

"Yes," replied Porthos; "he made us promise to give him his revenge."

"Very well. But do you know where we are to give him his revenge?"

No."
At the King's."
At the King's ?" exclaimed Athos.
Yes, gentlemen, at the King's. M. Groslow is on guard
ght over his Majesty; and, to divert him in his duty, he
tes us to keep him company."
All four ?" demanded Athos.
Pardieu ! all four. Could we leave our prisoners ?"
Aha !" cried Aramis.
Let us see," said Athos, much excited.
So we go to M. Groslow — we with our swords, you with
poignards. We four must master those eight imbeciles
their stupid commander. What do you say to that, Mon-
r Porthos ?"
I say that it is easy," answered Porthos.
We will dress the King in Groslow's clothes; Mousqueton,
naud, and Blaisois will hold our horses all ready at the
er of the first street; we leap upon them, and before day-
t we are twenty leagues from here. Now, is that well
ned, Athos ?"
thos placed his two hands on D'Artagnan's shoulder, and
ed at him with his calm and gentle smile.
I declare, my friend," said he, "that there is no creature
er heaven that equals you in nobility and courage. While
ave been imagining that you were indifferent to our sor-
s (which you really might have refused to share, without
inality), you alone have found what we were vainly seek-
So I repeat, D'Artagnan, that you are the best of us, and
ess and love you, my dear son !"
The idea of my not thinking this out !" said Porthos, clap-
his hand to his forehead, "although it is so simple."
But," said Aramis, "if I understand correctly, we are to
them all — are we not ?"
thos shuddered and turned very pale.
Mordiou !" said D'Artagnan, "it will be absolutely nec-
ry. For a long time I sought for some means of avoiding
ut I confess that I could find none."
Let us see," said Aramis; "we must face our situation
lly. How are we to proceed ?"
I have formed a double plan," replied D'Artagnan.
Let us hear the first," said Aramis.
Should we be all four together, at my signal — and this

signal shall be the words '*at last*' — each of you must plunge a poignard into the heart of the soldier who is nearest to you, and we must do the same. Thus, four men will be at once disposed of; the odds then become equal, as we shall then be four to five. Those five will either surrender and we shall gag them, or they will resist and we must kill them. If by chance our Amphitryon should change his mind, and receive to his party only Porthos and me, why, then we shall have harder work and must strike double; it will make it rather longer and cause more disturbance; but you will be ready outside with your swords, and must hasten to us at the first noise."

"But should you yourself be struck?" said Athos.

"Impossible!" said D'Artagnan; "these beer-swillers are too heavy and awkward. Besides, you must strike at the throat, Porthos: it kills as quickly, and prevents those whom you kill from calling out."

"Very well!" said Porthos; "it will be a pretty little throat-cutting."

"Horrible! horrible!" exclaimed Athos.

"Bah! you sensitive gentleman," said D'Artagnan; "you would kill many more in a battle. However, my friend," continued he, "if you think the King's life is not worth what it will cost, why, nothing has been said, and I will send to inform M. Groslow that I am unwell."

"No," said Athos; "I am wrong and you are right, my friend. Pardon me."

At this very moment the door opened and a soldier appeared.

"Captain Groslow," said he, in bad French, "informs M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon that he is waiting for them."

"Where?" asked D'Artagnan.

"In the room of the English Nebuchadnezzar," replied the soldier, an outrageous Puritan.

"Very well," said Athos, in excellent English, and colouring at the insult offered to royalty, — "very well; tell Captain Groslow that we are coming."

Then the Puritan withdrew. Orders had been given to the lacqueys to saddle eight horses, and to wait with them, without separating or dismounting, at the corner of a street situated at about twenty paces from the house in which the King lodged.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE GAME OF LANSQUENET.

It was now nine in the evening. The guard had been elieved at eight, and for an hour Captain Groslow had been n duty.

D'Artagnan and Porthos armed with their swords, and thos and Aramis each having a poignard concealed in his reast, went to the house which that evening served as the rison of Charles Stuart. The two last followed their conuerors, humble and apparently unarmed, as prisoners.

"Faith," said Groslow, on seeing them, "I had almost iven you up."

D'Artagnan went up to him and said in a low voice:

"In fact, we (M. du Vallon and myself) were for some ime rather doubtful about coming."

"Why so?" inquired Groslow.

D'Artagnan cast a significant glance at Athos and Aramis.

"Ah!" said Groslow, "on account of their opinions? But hat is of no consequence. On the contrary," he added, aughing, "if they wish to see their Stuart, they shall see im."

"Are we to pass the evening in the King's room?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No, but in the adjoining room; and as the door will remain open, it will be exactly the same as if we stayed in his room. Have you provided yourself with money?—for I promise you that I mean to have a hell of a game."

"Do you hear?" said D'Artagnan, making the gold clink in his pockets.

"Very good," said Groslow, and he opened the chamber door. "I will show you the way, gentlemen," he continued.

And he went in first.

D'Artagnan turned to his friends. Porthos was as careless as if nothing out of the common way was going on; Athos was pale, but resolved. Aramis was wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief.

The eight guards were at their posts: four were in the King's room, two at the door leading into it, and two at the outer door by which the four friends entered the first room.

At sight of their naked swords, Athos smiled; so it was not going to be a butchery, but a combat.

From this moment all his good-humour returned.

Charles, who could be seen through the open door, was lying on his bed, completely dressed, but with a woollen coverlet thrown over him.

At his bedside Parry was seated, reading a chapter from a Catholic Bible, in a low voice, yet sufficiently loud for Charles, who lay with his eyes closed, to hear.

A coarse tallow candle, set on a dirty table, lighted up the King's resigned face and the infinitely more agitated features of his attendant's.

From time to time Parry left off reading, thinking that his master was really asleep; but then the King would open his eyes and say, with a smile:

"Go on, my good Parry; I am listening."

Groslow advanced to the door of the King's chamber, purposely put on his hat again, though he had removed it to receive his guests, looked with contempt at this touching picture of an old servant reading the Bible to his imprisoned King, assured himself that every man was at his post, and then, turning to D'Artagnan, he looked triumphantly at the Frenchman, as if to demand an eulogy on his skill.

"Excellent," said the Gascon. "Cap de Diou! you will make a distinguished general."

"And do you think," said Groslow, "that the Stuart will have any chance of escape when I am on duty?"

"Certainly not," replied D'Artagnan, "unless friends should be showered upon him from heaven."

Groslow's face grew radiant.

As Charles Stuart had kept his eyes constantly closed during this scene, it was impossible to say whether he had or had not perceived the Puritan captain's insolence. But in spite of himself, when the clear accentuated tone of D'Artagnan's voice reached his ear, his eyelids opened. Parry, on his part, started and discontinued his reading.

"Why do you leave off?" said the King; "continue, my good Parry, unless indeed you are fatigued."

"No, Sire," said the valet.

And he resumed his reading.

A covered table was prepared in the first room, and on this were two lighted candles, cards, two dice-boxes, and dice.

" Gentlemen," said Groslow, " be seated, I beg of you. I l sit opposite Stuart, whom I so much like to see, especially ere he now is; you, M. d'Artagnan, opposite me."
Athos coloured with anger, and D'Artagnan frowned at n.
' That 's it," said D'Artagnan. " You, Monsieur le Comte la Fère, on the right of Monsieur Groslow; you, Monsieur Chevalier d'Herblay, on his left; and you, Du Vallon, near . You back me, and those gentlemen back M. Groslow."
By this arrangement D'Artagnan had Porthos on his left, l he spoke to him by his knee; while opposite to him were ios and Aramis, whom he governed by his look.
When the Comte de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay e mentioned, Charles again opened his eyes, and could not ain from raising his noble head and embracing in one look the actors in that scene.
At the same moment Parry turned over some leaves of the le, and read in a loud voice this verse of Jeremiah:
' *God said, Hear the words of the prophets, My servants, m I have sent to you, and whom I have given you.*"
The four friends exchanged a look. The words that Parry l just read indicated that the King attributed their prese to the right motive.
The eyes of D'Artagnan and his companions sparkled with

' You asked me, just now, whether I was in cash," said Artagnan, putting twenty pistoles on the table.
' Yes," said Groslow.
' Well, then, in return I tell you to guard your treasure ll, my dear Monsieur Groslow, for I promise you that we ill not leave the room without carrying it off from you."
' It shall not be without my defending it," said Groslow.
' So much the better," said D'Artagnan. " A fair fight, my ir captain, a fair fight! You know—or perhaps you do not ow — that is all we want."
' Ah! I know well enough," said Groslow, bursting into a rse laugh, " that you Frenchmen are always looking after es and bumps."
Charles had heard and comprehended all this; a slight colour unted to his cheeks. The soldiers who guarded him saw n gradually stretch out his wearied limbs, and, under the tence of excessive heat produced by a red-hot stove, throw

off the Scotch coverlet under which, as we have said, he was lying completely attired.

Athos and Aramis started with joy on perceiving that the King was dressed.

The game began. This evening the luck had turned, and was in favour of Groslow; he kept all and gained all. Thus a hundred pistoles passed from one side of the table to the other. Groslow was in the highest spirits.

Porthos, who had lost the fifty pistoles he had gained the previous evening, and thirty besides, was very cross, and questioned D'Artagnan, by pressing his knee, as if to ask him whether it was not time to begin another kind of game. Athos and Aramis also looked at him from time to time with a scrutinizing glance; but he remained perfectly unmoved.

It struck ten o'clock. The round was heard passing.

"How many rounds do you make of this kind?" asked D'Artagnan, drawing some more pistoles from his pocket.

"Five," answered Groslow. "One every two hours."

"Good," said D'Artagnan. "It is prudent."

And he cast a glance at Athos and Aramis.

The steps of the patrol were heard retreating.

D'Artagnan now for the first time answered Porthos's pressure of the knee by a similar one.

In the meantime the soldiers, though their orders were to remain in the King's room, were attracted by the play and by the sight of gold, so fascinating to all men, and had gradually approached the door, and there, standing on tiptoes, were looking over the shoulders of D'Artagnan and Porthos. The two at the other door had also drawn near, thus favouring the designs of the four friends, who much preferred having them near at hand to being obliged to run after them into different parts of the room. The two sentinels at the outer door had their swords drawn, but they were leaning on them as they watched the players.

As the moment approached, Athos appeared to become calm; his white, aristocratic hands kept fingering the louis, which he doubled up and bent back as if they had been made of tin. Aramis, less master of his feelings, was continually putting his hands into his breast; while Porthos, irritated by his losses, knocked D'Artagnan's knee as if he would fracture it.

D'Artagnan turned round, looking in a natural way behind him, and saw Parry standing between two of the soldiers, and

·les leaning on his elbow, with his hands clasped, and
.rently addressing a fervent prayer to God. D'Artagnan
ɜived that the time was come, that every one was at his
and that they were only waiting for the words "*at last,*"
h, it will be remembered, were to serve as the signal.
ɜ threw a preparatory glance at Athos and Aramis; and
of them gently pushed back their chairs to have free
ty of action.
ɜ gave Porthos another touch on the knee, whereupon
hos arose as if to stretch his legs, only, in rising, he made
elf certain that his sword would easily leave its scabbard.
Sacrebleu!" cried D'Artagnan; "twenty more pistoles
Really, Captain Groslow, you have extraordinary luck;
ver can last."
ıd he drew twenty more pistoles from his pocket.
A last throw, captain; these twenty pistoles on one last
N."
Done for twenty pistoles!" said Groslow.
ıd he turned two cards in the usual manner — a king for
·tagnan and an ace for himself.
A king," said D'Artagnan; "it is a good omen. Master
low," he added, "look out for the King."
ıd in spite of his command over himself there was a
ıge quivering in his voice that made his partner start.
roslow began to turn the cards one after the other. If he
ed an ace first, he had won; if he turned a king, he had lost.
e turned a king.
At last!" said D'Artagnan.
t these words Athos and Aramis rose up; Porthos drew
a step.
ɔignards and swords were just going to flash out, when
ienly the door opened, and Harrison made his appearance
he threshold, accompanied by a man enveloped in a cloak.
ɜhind this man the muskets of five or six soldiers were
glittering.
roslow arose in great haste, ashamed of being surprised
ıe midst of wine, cards, and dice. But Harrison took no
ɜe whatever of him, and entered the King's room, followed
ıis companions.
Charles Stuart," said he, "an order has arrived to conduct
to London without halting night or day; prepare, therefore,
epart instantaneously."

"And from whom has this order come?" asked the King. "From General Oliver Cromwell?"

"Yes," said Harrison, "and here is Mr. Mordaunt, who has just brought it, and is charged with its execution."

"Mordaunt!" muttered the four friends, looking at one another.

D'Artagnan quietly swept from the table all the money that he and Porthos had lost, and engulfed it in his enormous pocket. Athos and Aramis drew themselves up behind him. At this movement Mordaunt turned round, recognised them, and uttered an exclamation of savage delight.

"I believe that we are caught," said D'Artagnan to his friends, in a low voice.

"Not yet," said Porthos.

"Colonel! Colonel!" cried Mordaunt, "surround the room! You are betrayed! These four Frenchmen escaped from Newcastle, and doubtless want to carry off the King. Arrest them!"

"Ah, young man!" said D'Artagnan, drawing his sword, "such an order is more easily given than executed."

Then giving a terrible circular flourish with his sword: "Retreat, my friends!" he exclaimed — "retreat!"

At the same time he darted to the door, and overthrew the two soldiers who guarded it, before they had time to cock their muskets. Athos and Aramis followed him, Porthos bringing up the rear; and before the soldiers, officers, and colonel had time to recover from their consternation they were in the street.

"Fire!" cried Mordaunt; "fire on them!"

Two or three musket-shots were fired, but they had no further effect than that of disclosing the four fugitives just turning the corner of the street, safe and sound.

The horses were at the appointed place, and the valets had only to throw the bridles to their masters, who vaulted into the saddle with the lightness of consummate horsemen.

"Forward!" said D'Artagnan, "and spur on! Be steady."

They galloped on in this manner, following D'Artagnan, and taking the same road by which they had entered in the evening; that is to say, the direction of Scotland. The little town had neither walls nor gates, and they left it without obstruction.

At about fifty paces from the last house D'Artagnan stopped *short.*

Halt!" said he.

What do you mean by 'halt'?" inquired Porthos. "At speed, you mean to say."

Not at all," said D'Artagnan. "This time they will pur- us; so let them leave the town and run after us on the l to Scotland; and when we have seen them galloping past we will set off in the opposite direction."

small rivulet crossed the road a little farther on, and over stream a bridge was thrown. D'Artagnan led his horse er the arch of the bridge; his friends followed him.

hey had not been there ten minutes before they heard the d gallop of a troop of horsemen. In five minutes more troop had passed over their heads, little imagining that had been separated from those they sought only by the kness of the arch of the bridge.

CHAPTER LXVI.

LONDON.

WHEN the noise of the horses was lost in the distance, rtagnan regained the bank of the stream and began to e his way across the plain, directing his course as well as ould toward London. His three friends followed him in nce, until, by means of a large circuit, they had left the n far behind them.

This time," said D'Artagnan, when at length he thought t they were far enough from the point of their departure to nge from a gallop to a trot, "I positively think that all is , and that the best thing we can do is to return to France. at do you say to this proposition, Athos? Do you not think easonable?"

Yes, my dear friend," replied Athos; "but you said one ng the other day that was more than reasonable — it was a le and generous sentiment. You said: 'We will die here.' peat your very words."

'Oh," said Porthos, "death is nothing. Death ought not to turb us, since we know not what it is; but it is the idea of eat that torments me. By the manner in which things n out, I can perceive that we must fight London, the prov-

inces, all England; and really we cannot fail to be beaten last."

"We ought to see the end of this great tragedy," said Ath "Whatever it may be, let us not leave England till after t catastrophe. Are you of my opinion, Aramis?"

"Entirely so, my dear Count. Besides, I confess that should not be sorry to see this Mordaunt again. It seems me that we have an account to settle with him; and it is r our custom to leave a country without paying debts of tl kind."

"Ah! that is another thing," said D'Artagnan; "now y have given a plausible reason. I confess that to find M daunt I would remain a year in London, if necessary. On let us lodge with some trusty man, and so as not to awak suspicion; for Cromwell will certainly inquire after us, and, far as I can judge, M. Cromwell is no joker. Athos, you know, in all the city, an hotel where we can find cle sheets, roast beef reasonably cooked, and wine that is n made of hops or gin?"

"I think that I know just what you wish," replied Athc "De Winter took us to the house of a man who, he said, w an old Spaniard, naturalized as an Englishman by the guine of his new countrymen. What do you say to it, Aramis?"

"The plan of establishing ourselves at the house of Señ Perez appears to me most reasonable," said Aramis. "I a once adopt it. We will invoke the memory of poor D Winter, for whom he appeared to have a great veneration we will tell him that we are come as men of leisure, to see all that is going on; we will each of us spend a guinea a day at his house; and I believe that by means of these precautions we may remain in security."

"But you forget one precaution, Aramis, and that a very material one."

"What is that?"

"To change our clothes."

"Bah!" said Porthos, "why should we do so, when we are so much at our ease in these?"

"So as not to be discovered," said D'Artagnan. "Our dress has a cut and a uniformity of colour that at first sight denote the Frenchman. Now, I am not so devoted to the cut of my doublet or the colour of my breeches as to run the risk of being hanged at Tyburn, or sent to take a turn in the Indies,

out of affection for them; so I will go and buy me a chestnut-coloured dress. I have remarked that all these imbecile Puritans are passionately fond of that colour."

"But can you find your man?" asked Aramis.

"Yes, certainly," replied Athos. "He lived at Bedford's Tavern, Greenhall Street; besides, I could go through the city with my eyes shut."

"I wish that we were already there," said D'Artagnan; "and my opinion is that we ought to reach London before daylight, even if we foundered our horses."

"Come along, then," said Athos; "for if I am right in my calculations we cannot be more than eight or ten leagues from it."

The friends pushed forward, and reached London about five in the morning. At the gate by which they entered, they were stopped; but Athos affirmed, in excellent English, that they had been sent forward by Colonel Harrison, to inform his colleague, Mr. Pride, of the King's speedy arrival. This led to some questions respecting the King's capture, of which Athos gave such precise particulars that any suspicions by the guards entertained must have been completely dissipated. So the four friends were admitted into the city with many Puritan congratulations.

Athos had spoken truly. He went straight to Bedford's Tavern, and made himself known to the landlord, who was so delighted on finding him return with such a large and splendid party that he immediately ordered his best rooms to be prepared for them.

Although daylight had not yet appeared, our four travellers, on reaching London, found the whole town in commotion. The report that the King was approaching the metropolis, in Colonel Harrison's custody, had been circulated the evening before, and many people had not even gone to bed, apprehensive that the Stuart, as they called him, might arrive during the night, without their being present to witness his entrance.

The project of changing their clothes had been adopted, you will remember, unanimously, save for a slight opposition from Porthos. So they proceeded to put it into execution. Their landlord sent for clothes of every description, as if he wished to replenish his wardrobe. Athos chose a dark suit that gave him the appearance of an honest middle-class citizen; Aramis, who did not wish to give up his sword, selected dark-green

clothes of military cut; Porthos was seduced by a red doublet and green breeches; while D'Artagnan, whose colour had been before settled, had only to determine the shade, and in the chestnut-coloured suit which he fancied looked exactly like a retired grocer.

Grimaud and Mousqueton, not being in livery, were sufficiently disguised. Besides, Grimaud was a very good specimen of the calm, dry, stiff, and cautious Englishman; Mousqueton that of the portly, bloated, indolent Englishman.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, "let us proceed to the principal point — let us cut our hair, that we may not be insulted by the populace. Being no longer gentlemen by our swords, let us be Puritans by our head-dress. It is, as you are aware, the important point distinguishing the Covenanter from the Cavalier."

On this important point, however, D'Artagnan found Aramis very stubborn. He wished, at all hazards, to retain his hair, which was very handsome, and of which he took the greatest care; and it was necessary for Athos, to whom all such things were indifferent, to set him the example. Porthos, without hesitation, abandoned his headpiece to Mousqueton, who mercilessly sheared away his thick, strong locks. D'Artagnan cut for himself a fantastic head, which was not a bad resemblance to the medals of the time of Francis I. or Charles IX.

"We are hideous," said Athos.

"It appears to me that we smack frightfully of Puritanism," said Aramis.

"My head is cold," said Porthos.

"I feel a great inclination to preach," said D'Artagnan.

"Now," said Athos, "as we should not know ourselves, and consequently have no fear of being recognised by others, let us go and witness the King's entrance. If he has travelled all night he cannot now be far from London."

In fact, the four friends had not been out mingling with the crowd more than two hours before loud cries and a violent movement announced Charles's arrival. A coach had been sent to meet him, and when far distant the gigantic Porthos, who overtopped every one by a head, announced that he saw the cavalcade approaching. D'Artagnan raised himself on his toes, while Athos and Aramis listened to catch the general opinions of the populace. The coach passed, and D'Artagnan *perceived* Harrison at one door and Mordaunt at the other.

ople, whose sentiments Athos and Aramis were anxious
ı, sent forth violent imprecations against Charles.
ıs returned in utter despair.
dear," said D'Artagnan, "you distress yourself in vain,
protest that I consider the position of affairs very
ıte. For my part, I attach myself to the cause only
.r sake, and from a certain artistic interest in the poli-
it, *à la Mousquetaire*. I think it would be an exceed-
leasant thing to snatch their prey from these bawlers,
hold them up to derision. I will think about it."
he morrow, while looking out of his window, which
he most populous parts of the city, Athos heard the
ıentary decree proclaimed that ordered the ex-King
ı I. to be placed at the bar on a charge of treason and
ıf power.
tagnan was near him; Aramis was looking over a map;
ı was absorbed in the last delicacies of a savoury break-

e Parliament!" exclaimed Athos. "It is impossible
.e Parliament can have passed such a bill."
ten," said D'Artagnan. "I understand English very
ıut as English is nothing but French badly pronounced,
what I hear: '*Parliament's Bill*,' which is the same as
parlement, or God damn me, as they say here!"
ıis moment the landlord came in. Athos beckoned to
draw near.
s the Parliament passed this bill?" asked Athos, in
ı.
ı, my Lord, — the purified Parliament."
ıat do you mean by that? Are there two Parliaments?"
friend," interrupted D'Artagnan, "as I do not under-
'nglish well, and as we all understand Spanish, do us the
ss to talk with us in that language, which is your own,
ıich, consequently, you must speak with pleasure when
d an opportunity."
, excellent!" said Aramis.
hos said nothing, as all his attention, as we have said,
ıcentrated on a cutlet, which he was engaged in despoil-
its most succulent parts.
ıat did you ask?" said the host, in Spanish.
sked," said Athos, in the same language, "if there were
rliaments — one pure and the other corrupt?"

"Oh, how strange it is!" said Porthos, slowly raising his head and looking at the friends with an air of astonishment. "I understand English now — I comprehend what you say!"

"It is because we are speaking Spanish, my dear friend," said Athos, with his usual coolness.

"Oh, diable!" said Porthos, "I am sorry for it; it would have given me one more language."

"When I say the pure Parliament, señor," replied the host, "I speak of that which Colonel Pride has purified."

"Well, really," said D'Artagnan, "these men are mighty ingenious. I must give M. Mazarin and the coadjutor a hint about this on my return to France. The one will purify in the name of the Court, and the other in the name of the people, so that there will no longer be any Parliament at all."

"And who is this Colonel Pride?" asked Aramis, "and what method has he taken to purify the Parliament?"

"Colonel Pride," answered the Spaniard, "is a former carter, a man of considerable cleverness, who remarked one thing while driving his wagon: this was, that when he met with a stone on the road it was easier work to remove it than to make his wheels pass over it. Now, of the two hundred and fifty-one members who composed the Parliament, a hundred and ninety-one annoyed him, and might have overturned his political wagon. So he took them, as he formerly took the stones, and threw them out of the Chamber."

"Very pretty!" said D'Artagnan, who, himself a clever man, always admired it in another person.

"And were all these ejected members followers of the Stuart?" asked Athos.

"Certainly, señor; and you understand that they would have saved the King."

"Por Dios!" said Porthos majestically, "they constituted the majority."

"And do you think that he will consent to appear before such a tribunal?" said Aramis.

"He must," replied the Spaniard. "Should he refuse, the people would compel him."

"Thank you, Master Perez," said Athos; "I am now sufficiently instructed."

"Do you, at last, begin to believe that the cause is lost, Athos," said D'Artagnan, "and that, with the Harrisons,

rides, and Cromwells against us, we shall never get
?"
ing will be given up to the tribunal," said Athos;
the silence of his partisans proves that some plot
g."
gnan shrugged his shoulders.
said Aramis, "if they dare to condemn their King,
sentence him to banishment or imprisonment, that is

gnan whistled with some little appearance of incre-

all see," said Athos, "for we shall witness the trial,
."
ill not have long to wait," said the host, "for it
morrow."
exclaimed Athos, "then the indictment was pre-
ore the King was taken?"
less it was framed on the very day that the King
it!" said D'Artagnan.
now," replied Aramis, "that it was our friend Mor-
made, if not the actual bargain, at any rate the first
in this little transaction."
now," said D'Artagnan, "that wherever he may come
hand I mean to kill that M. Mordaunt."
en!" said Athos; "such a wretch as that!"
t is precisely because he is a wretch that I shall kill
ined D'Artagnan. "Ah! dear friend, I yield suffi-
your wishes to make you indulgent to mine. Besides,
ll, whether it pleases you or not, I declare that this
shall only be killed by me."
y me," said Porthos.
y me," said Aramis.
ing unanimity!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "and which
its good bourgeois like ourselves. Come, let us take
ough the town. Mordaunt himself would not know
ards off in this fog. Come, let us go and drink a
"
said Porthos, "it will be a change from beer."
e four friends went out to take, as is commonly said,
the country.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE TRIAL.

THE next day a numerous guard conducted Charles I. be the high tribunal which was to try him.

The crowd took possession of the streets and houses ad ing the palace; at the very outset, the progress of the friends was obstructed by the almost insurmountable obst of this living wall. Some of the common people, tough surly, pushed Aramis so rudely that Porthos raised his for able fist and let it fall upon a baker's mealy face, which mediately changed its colour and was covered with bl squashed, as it was, like a bunch of ripe grapes. This ca a commotion; three men rushed at Porthos; but Athos go of one and D'Artagnan of another, while Porthos threw third over his head.

Some Englishmen, who were lovers of the pugilistic art mired the rapid and easy manner in which this manœuvre been executed, and clapped their hands. So, instead of b knocked down, as they began to fear they should be, Por and his friends narrowly escaped being carried in triun but our four friends, who dreaded everything that might n them conspicuous, managed to escape the ovation. Ne theless, they gained one advantage by this herculean dei stration: the crowd at once opened a passage before them they reached the palace.

All London was crowding at the gallery doors, and they ceeded in doing what a moment before had seemed to t impossible. So when the four friends succeeded in penetra into one of them, they found the first three benches alre occupied. This was no great loss for men who wished to a recognition. Accordingly they took their places, very satisfied at having secured even these, though Porthos wa to display his red doublet and green breeches, and lamer that he was not in the first row.

The seats were arranged as in an amphitheatre, and f their situation the four friends commanded all the assembl By chance they were exactly in the middle of the gall and directly opposite the seat that had been prepared the King.

; eleven o'clock in the morning the King appeared at
: of the hall. He entered surrounded by guards, but
; and with a calm air he cast a glance of confidence
nd, as if he had come to preside over an assembly of
ient subjects, and not to reply to the accusations of a
s Court.
udges, proud of having a King to humble, were evi-
repared to make use of the right that they had arro-
themselves. Consequently an usher went to tell
that it was the custom for the accused to be uncovered
resence of his judges.
es, without answering, set his hat on more firmly and
is head in another direction. Then, when the usher
ed, he sat down in the armchair prepared for him,
the president, tapping his boot with a slender stick
held in his hand.
, who accompanied him, stood behind him.
agnan, instead of looking at all this ceremonial, was
g Athos, whose countenance seemed to reflect all those
s which the King, from the great power he exerted
feelings, managed to banish from his own. This agi-
Athos, a man so cold and calm, alarmed D'Artagnan.
pe," said he to him in a whisper, "that you will take
from his Majesty, and not get us foolishly killed in
e."
ot disturb yourself," said Athos.
!" continued D'Artagnan, "it appears as if they were
f something; for see, they are doubling the guards;
hey only had halberds, but now there are muskets.
something now for everybody — the halberds are for
itors on the floor, the muskets for us."
ty, forty, fifty, seventy men," said Porthos, counting
o had just arrived.
" said Aramis, "you forget the officer, Porthos; and
ink that he is worth counting."
da!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.
he turned pale with anger, for he had discovered Mor-
ho, with his sword drawn, was leading the armed sol-
hind the King; that is to say, opposite the galleries.
he have discovered us?" continued D'Artagnan. "In
e I would beat a retreat — I am not at all ambitious of
particular mode of death imposed on me, and have a

great desire to make my own choice in that respect. Now, I should not choose to be shot in a box."

"No," said Aramis, "he has not seen us; he sees only the King. Mordieu! how the insolent rascal stares at him! Can he hate him as much as he hates us?"

"Pardieu!" said Athos; "we only deprived him of his mother, but the King has despoiled him of his name and fortune."

"That is true," said Aramis. "But silence; the president is speaking to the King."

In fact, at this moment, the president, Bradshaw, thus addressed the accused monarch:

"Stuart," said he, "listen to the roll-call of your judges, and make any observations to the Court that you may wish to make."

The King, as if these words had not been addressed to him, turned his head the other way.

The president waited, but as there was no reply a moment's silence followed.

Of the hundred and sixty-three members on the list, only seventy-three answered; the others, unwilling to participate in such an act, had absented themselves.

"I proceed to roll-call," said Bradshaw, without seeming to notice the absence of three-fifths of the assembly.

And he began to name successively the members present and absent. Those present answered in a loud or gentle voice, according to the degree of confidence that each felt in his own opinion. A short silence always succeeded the names of the absent, which were repeated twice.

Colonel Fairfax's name came in its turn, and was followed by one of those moments of brief but solemn silence that announced the absence of those members who did not wish to take a personal share in this trial.

"Colonel Fairfax?" repeated Bradshaw.

"Fairfax?" responded a mocking voice, the silvery tone of which denoted it to be a woman's; "he has too much sense to be here."

These words, pronounced with that audacity which women derive from their weakness — a weakness that relieves them of all fears of vengeance — produced an immense burst of laughter.

"It is a woman's voice!" exclaimed Aramis. "Ah, by my

, I would give a good deal to know if she is young and
y."
nd he mounted one of the seats to endeavour to see into
gallery whence the voice had issued.
Upon my soul," said Aramis, "she is charming! Just
, D'Artagnan; everybody is looking at her; and in spite
radshaw's frown, she has not even turned pale."
It is Lady Fairfax herself," said D'Artagnan. "Do you
remember, Porthos, we saw her, with her husband, at
eral Cromwell's?"
a short time the quiet, which had been interrupted by
strange episode, was restored, and the roll-call was re-
ed.
These rascals will raise the sitting when they perceive that
are not sufficiently numerous," said the Comte de la
.
You do not know them, Athos. Observe Mordaunt's smile,
see how he looks at the King. Is that the look of a man
fears that his victim will escape him? No, no! It is
ook of gratified hatred — of revenge confident of satiating
f! Ah! cursed basilisk! it will be a happy day for me
n I cross something else besides a look with you!"
The King is really handsome," said Porthos; "and see,
ough he is a prisoner, how carefully he is dressed. The
ie in his hat is worth at least fifty pistoles. Just look at
ramis!"
he list being finished, the speaker gave orders for the bill
ndictment to be read.
thos turned pale; he was again deceived in his expecta-
. Although the judges were deficient in number, the trial
about to proceed; so the King was condemned before-
d.
I told you so, Athos," said D'Artagnan, shrugging his
lders, "but you are still incredulous. Now pluck up
r courage, and listen, not too angrily I beg of you, to the
icable horrors that yonder man in black is about to say to
King, with license and privilege."
n fact, never had more brutal accusations — never had
e contemptible insults — never had a more cruel inquisi-
dishonoured royal majesty. Before that time they had
n content merely to assassinate kings; at least, it was only
their dead bodies that insults were lavished.

Charles listened to the accuser's speech with great attention, disregarding the insults, dwelling on the complaints; and when the hatred boiled over too much — when the accuser made himself the executioner by anticipation — he answered by a smile of contempt. It was, after all, a terrible instrument, in which the unfortunate King found all his imprudences changed into wilful deeds — his errors transformed to crimes.

D'Artagnan, who permitted all this torrent of abuse to roll along with a feeling of disdain that it merited, fixed his judicial mind on some of the accuser's real charges.

"The fact is," said he, "if imprudence and carelessness are punishable, this poor King deserves some penalty. But it seems to me that what he now suffers is severe enough."

"After all," replied Aramis, "the punishment should not fall on the King, but on his ministers; since the fundamental law of the English constitution is, that *the King can do no wrong.*"

"For my part," thought Porthos, looking at Mordaunt and concerned with him alone, "if it were not for disturbing the gravity of the occasion, I would jump down from the gallery, and in three bounds I would reach Mordaunt and choke him to death. I would then take him by the feet, and knock down all those wretched Musketeers, who are mere caricatures of the French Musketeers; and in the meantime D'Artagnan, who is full of ready wit, would perhaps find some means of saving the King. I really must talk to him about it."

Athos, with fire in his eyes and clenched fists, his lips bloody from biting them, was sitting foaming with rage at that ceaseless parliamentary insult and the King's unwearying forbearance; his iron arm and indomitable heart were changed into a trembling hand and a shuddering frame.

At this moment the accuser finished his speech with these words:

"The present accusation is brought forward by us in the name of the English people."

There was a murmur in the galleries at these words; and another voice, not a woman's, but a man's, strong and furious, thundered behind D'Artagnan:

"You lie! and nine-tenths of the people of England are horrified at what you say!"

This voice was that of Athos, who, utterly carried away by his feelings, and standing up, with his hand extended, thus *addressed* the public accuser.

his apostrophe, King, judges, spectators, all turned their
o the gallery where the four friends were. Mordaunt
e same, and recognised Athos, around whom his three
s were standing, pale and threatening. His eyes flashed
oy; he had once more discovered those to whose detec-
ıd death he had consecrated his life. A furious gesture
ed twenty of his Musketeers around him, and, pointing
gallery where he saw his enemies:
re on that gallery!" he exclaimed.
quick as thought D'Artagnan, seizing Athos round the
, and Porthos, dragging Aramis with him, leaped down
he benches and darted into the passage, hastily descended
airs, and were speedily lost amid the crowd; while, in
erior of the hall, the lowered muskets threatened three
nd spectators, whose noisy fears and cries for mercy
d the orders that had been given for massacre.
rles had also recognised the four Frenchmen. He placed
nd on his heart to stay its beatings, and the other over
s that he might not see the murder of his faithful friends.
daunt, pale and trembling with rage, rushed out of the
word in hand, with ten Halberdiers, searched the crowd,
gating and breathing vengeance; then he returned,
ıt having discovered those he sought.
confusion was indescribable. More than half an hour
l before any one could be heard. The judges thought
gallery would thunder forth its voice. The galleries
w the muskets pointed at them, and, divided between
nd curiosity, remained disturbed and agitated.
ength calm was restored.
hat have you to say in your defence?" said Bradshaw
King.
n, in the accent of a judge and not of a criminal, and
is hat still on his head, he arose, without any indication
ıility, but with an air of command:
fore questioning me," said Charles, "answer me. At
stle I was free, and there I concluded a treaty with the
ment. Instead of observing your part of that treaty, as
ormed mine, you purchased me from the Scots — not for
I know, and that does credit to the economy of your
ament. But, because you paid the price of a slave for
you imagine that I have ceased to be your King? No.
swer you would be to acknowledge that this is the case.

So then I will not answer you until you have established your right to question me. To answer would be to acknowledge you as my judges; and I only recognise you as my executioners."

And in the midst of deathlike silence, Charles, calm, haughty, and with his head still covered, resumed his seat.

"Oh, that my Frenchmen were there!" murmured the King proudly, as he turned toward the gallery, where they had appeared for an instant; "they would see that their friend was worthy of being defended while living and lamented when dead."

But in vain did he seek to penetrate into the depths of the crowd, and ask as it were of God the sweet consolation of their presence; he discovered nothing but dull and timid faces — he felt that he was contending with hatred and ferocity.

"Well, then," said the president, seeing that Charles was thoroughly determined to be silent, "so be it; we will judge you in spite of your silence. You are accused of treason, of abuse of power, and of murder. The witnesses will be trustworthy. Go, then; the next sitting shall effect what you refuse to agree to in this."

Charles arose, and turning to Parry, whom he saw pale, with face and forehead damp with perspiration:

"Well now, my good Parry, what is the matter?" said he. "What can agitate you so?"

"Oh, Sire!" said Parry, with tears in his eyes, and in a supplicating voice, "Sire, on leaving the hall, do not look to the left!"

"And why not, Parry?"

"Do not look, I beseech your Majesty!"

"But what is the matter? Speak," said Charles, trying to look beyond the hedge of soldiers stationed behind him.

"It is — but you will not look, will you, Sire? — they have laid on a table the axe with which they execute criminals. 'T is a hideous sight; do not look at it, Sire, I beseech you!"

"The fools!" said Charles; "do they think that I am as cowardly as themselves? You did well to tell me of this. Thank you, Parry."

And the King left the hall, following his guards.

To the left of the door there actually gleamed with an ominous light, reflected from the red cloth on which it rested, the white axe with its long handle polished by the executioner's *hands.*

s he came opposite to it Charles stopped, and turning a smile:

Aha!" said he, laughing, "the axe! An ingenious bug-, worthy of those who know not what it is to be a leman. Thou dost not frighten me, thou fatal axe," he nued, striking it with the slender stick he held in his ., "and I strike thee, waiting patiently, and like a Chris- until thou shalt return the blow."

id shrugging his shoulders with royal disdain, he con-ed on his way; leaving those quite stupefied who had ied round the table to see what effect the sight of that which was soon to separate his head from his body, would on the King's face.

Really," said the King to Parry, "God forgive me, but people seem to take me for some mere Indian cotton hant, and not for a gentleman accustomed to see the steel . Do they imagine that I am not equal to a butcher?"

he said these words he reached the door. A vast con-se of people had collected, and as they had been unable to admission to the galleries, they were resolved at least to he end of the spectacle, the most interesting part of which had lost. This innumerable multitude, whose ranks were ly sprinkled with threatening faces, drew a slight sigh the King.

What a throng!" he said to himself; "and not one friend ig them all!"

hilst mentally uttering these words of doubt and despond-, a voice, quite close to him, as if responding to his ghts, said:

God bless his fallen Majesty!"

ie King turned his head quickly, with tears in his eyes his heart.

was an old soldier of his Guards, who could not bear to is captive King pass so near him without paying him his homage.

it instantly the unlucky wretch was nearly stunned by s from sword-hilts.

nong those who struck him the King perceived Captain low.

Alas!" said Charles, "a severe punishment for a very t offence."

ien, with his heart overflowing, he continued on his way,

but he had not proceeded a hundred paces before a furious creature, leaning forward between two soldiers, spat in the King's face, as the infamous and accused Jew spat in the face of Jesus of Nazareth.

Loud bursts of laughter, mingled with hoarse murmurs, followed. The crowd separated, again rushed together, waved to and fro like a tempestuous sea, and the King fancied that he saw the flash of Athos's eye, in the midst of this living surge.

Charles wiped his face, and said, with a melancholy smile:

"The poor fellow! — for half a crown he would do the same to his father."

The King was not mistaken. He had indeed seen Athos and his friends, who had again mingled with the crowd, and were following the royal martyr with a last look.

When the soldier saluted Charles, Athos's heart melted with joy; and when the unfortunate man recovered his senses, he found ten guineas in his pocket, which the French gentleman had slipped into it. But when the cowardly scoffer spat in the face of the royal prisoner, Athos put his hand to his dagger.

D'Artagnan held back his hand, and said in a hoarse voice:

"Wait!"

Never had D'Artagnan addressed either the Comte de la Fère or Athos in such a way!

Athos paused.

D'Artagnan put his arm into Athos's, made a sign to Porthos and Aramis not to lose sight of them, and placed himself behind the large-armed man, who was still laughing at his dastardly joke, and whom some others, as violent as himself, were congratulating.

This man walked toward the City. D'Artagnan, still leaning on Athos's arm, followed him, making a sign to Porthos and Aramis to keep behind them.

The man, who seemed to be a butcher's assistant, with two companions went down a small, steep, solitary street that led to the river.

D'Artagnan had now let go Athos's arm, and was walking just behind the man who had insulted the King.

As they came near the river, the three men perceived that they were followed. They stopped and, looking insolently at the Frenchmen, exchanged some jokes among themselves.

"I do not understand English, Athos," said D'Artagnan; but you do, and must therefore be my interpreter."

And at these words, quickening his pace, he passed the three ıen; but turning almost immediately, he went up to the ıtcher, who stopped, and touching him on the breast with the p of his forefinger:

"Repeat what I say to him, Athos," he said to his friend: You have behaved like a coward; you have insulted a de-ıncelless man; you have polluted the face of your King, and ou shall die!"

Athos, pale as a ghost, translated these strange words to the ıan, who, seeing the sinister preparations and D'Artagnan's ırrible eyes, was about to defend himself. Aramis at this ıoment put his hand to his sword.

"No, not the sword — not the sword!" said D'Artagnan; the sword is for gentlemen;" and seizing the butcher by the ıroat: "Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "crush this wretch for ıe with one blow of your fist."

Porthos raised his terrible arm, made it whistle through the ir like a sling, and the heavy mass fell with a dull thud on ıe coward's skull and broke it.

The man fell as an ox falls under the hammer.

His companions tried to call out, tried to flee, but their oices failed and their trembling limbs gave way.

"Tell them this also, Athos," said D'Artagnan: "Thus shall ie all those who forget that a prisoner is sacred; that a cap-ve king is doubly the representative of the Almighty."

Athos repeated D'Artagnan's words.

The two men, in mute terror and with bristling hair, gazed t their companion's body, which was swimming in streams of lack blood.

Then, recovering both their voices and their strength, they ed with a scream, clasping their hands together.

"Justice is satisfied," said Porthos, wiping his forehead.

"And now," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "do not doubt me, nd be perfectly easy in your mind. I take on myself every-hing concerning the King."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

WHITEHALL.

THE Parliament, as was easily foreseen, condemned Charles Stuart to death. Political trials are always vain formalities; for the very passions that produce the accusation also lead to the condemnation. Such is the terrible logic of revolutions.

Although our friends expected this result, yet it overwhelmed them with sorrow. D'Artagnan, whose mind was never so full of resources as in extreme cases, swore afresh that he would try all possible means to prevent the catastrophe of this bloody tragedy. But by what means? They were as yet but dimly perceptible to his mind. Everything must depend upon circumstances; and until a complete plan could be arranged, it was necessary, at all hazards, in order to gain time, to place some obstacle in the way of the execution taking place on the following day, as had been resolved upon by the judges. The only apparent method was to remove the London executioner.

The executioner once away, the sentence could not be carried into effect. Doubtless one would be procured from the nearest provincial town; but even this would gain at least one day, and one day in such a case might possibly be salvation. D'Artagnan undertook this more than difficult task.

Another point, not less essential, was to apprise Charles Stuart that an attempt would be made to rescue him, in order that he might, as far as he could, second the efforts of his friends, or, at any rate, might do nothing to impede them. Aramis undertook this perilous task. The King had requested that Bishop Juxon might visit him in his prison at Whitehall, and Mordaunt had gone that very evening to the Bishop to apprise him of the King's pious wish, and of Cromwell's permission. Aramis resolved either to persuade or to frighten the Bishop into letting him go in his stead, attired in his sacerdotal habiliments, to the Palace of Whitehall.

Finally Athos took upon himself to prepare means for quitting England, either in the event of failure or of success.

The evening being come, they appointed to meet at their inn at eleven o'clock, and each set off on his perilous task.

The Palace of Whitehall was guarded by three regiments of cavalry, and more than all by the incessant and anxious watch-

fulness of Cromwell, who kept going back and forth, and sending his officers and agents.

Alone, and in his accustomed room, illumined by two wax lights, the condemned monarch was sorrowfully looking back upon the magnificence of his past greatness, as a man at the last hour sees the vision of life more brilliant and sweeter than ever.

Parry had not left his master, and since his condemnation had not ceased to weep.

Charles Stuart, leaning on a table, was gazing at a medallion which bore the portraits of his wife and daughter. He was expecting first Juxon and then martyrdom.

Sometimes his thoughts reverted to those brave French gentlemen, who already seemed separated a hundred leagues from him, and as if fabulous or chimerical, like those visions of sleep that disappear on waking.

Charles did, in fact, ask himself whether all that had passed was not a dream, or at any rate the delirium of fever.

At this thought he rose up, took a few steps to rouse himself from his torpor, and went to the window; but below he saw the muskets of the guards shining. Then he was compelled to confess to himself that he was awake, and that his cruel dream was a stern reality.

He returned in silence to his seat, again leaned his elbows on the table, rested his head on his hand, and mused.

"Alas!" said he to himself, "if I had for my confessor one of those luminaries of the Church whose soul has fathomed all the mysteries of life, all the trivialities of grandeur, perhaps his voice would stifle the whisper that mourns in my soul. But I shall have a vulgar-souled priest, whose career and fortune have been shattered by my misfortunes. He will talk to me of God and of death, as he has talked to other dying persons, without comprehending that I, the King, when I die, leave my throne to an usurper, while my children are without bread."

Then raising the portrait to his lips, he murmured successively the names of each of his children.

The night, as we have said, was dark and gloomy. The clock of the neighbouring church slowly struck. The pale light of the two candles, diffused through the large and lofty chamber, conjured forth phantoms dimly illumined by strange reflections. Those phantoms were the King's ancestors

appeared to start from their gilded frames; the reflections were the last blue and fitful gleams of a charcoal fire going out.

A deep sadness seized upon Charles. He buried his head in his hands, thought of that world so beautiful when we are about to leave it, or rather when it is about to leave us, — of the caresses of his children, so sweet and gentle, especially when one is separated from them never to meet again, — and then of his wife, that noble and courageous being who had stood by him to the last moment. He drew from his breast the diamond cross and the star of the Garter that she had sent to him by those generous Frenchmen, and kissed them; and then, as he thought that she would not again see these objects until he was laid cold and mutilated in the tomb, he felt those icy tremors run through his frame which death throws over us as his first mantle.

Then, in that room that recalled so many royal memories, where he had been surrounded by so many courtiers and so much flattery, alone with one mournful servant whose feeble soul could not sustain his soul, the King allowed his courage to fall to the level of that weakness, of that darkness, of that wintry cold, and — shall we say it? — that King who died so nobly, so sublimely, with the smile of resignation on his lips, secretly wiped up a tear that had fallen on the table and trembled on the gold-embroidered table-cloth.

Suddenly footsteps were heard in the passage, the door opened, torches filled the room with a smoky light, and an ecclesiastic entered clothed in his episcopal robes, and followed by two guards, to whom Charles made an imperious sign.

The guards retired, and the room again became dark.

"Juxon!" exclaimed Charles; "Juxon! Thank you, my last friend; you are come just in time."

The Bishop cast a significant and anxious glance at the man who was sobbing in the corner of the fireplace.

"Come, Parry," said the King, "do not weep, for God comes to us."

"If it is Parry," said the Bishop, "I have nothing to fear. Therefore, Sire, permit me to salute your Majesty, and to tell you who I am and why I am come."

At this sight and this voice Charles would doubtless have uttered an exclamation; but Aramis put his finger to his lips and made a low bow to the King.

"The Chevalier!" murmured Charles.

"Yes, Sire," said Aramis, raising his voice; "yes, Bishop Juxon, Christ's faithful chevalier, who obeys your Majesty's command."

Charles clasped his hands. He had recognized D'Herblay, and was dumbfounded, overwhelmed by the unceasing devotion of these men, who though strangers, and with no other motive than a duty imposed on them by their own consciences, were thus struggling against the will of a people and the destiny of a King.

"You!" he exclaimed, "you! How did you succeed in reaching here? My God! if you were discovered you would be lost."

"Do not waste a thought upon me, Sire," said Aramis, still by a gesture enjoining silence; "think of yourself alone; your friends, as you may perceive, are on the alert. What we can accomplish I know not as yet; but four determined men can do much. In the meantime, do not close an eye to-night; be not surprised at anything, and expect everything."

Charles shook his head.

"My friend," said he, "are you aware that you have no time to lose, and that whatever you propose to do must be done very quickly? Do you know I am to die at ten o'clock to-morrow?"

"Sire, something will happen before that time which will render the execution impossible."

The King regarded Aramis with astonishment.

At that very moment they heard, under the King's window, a strange noise, resembling that produced by unloading timber from a wagon.

"Do you hear?" said the King.

The noise was followed by a cry of pain.

"I hear," said Aramis, "but I do not understand the noise or the meaning of that cry."

"I do not know who can have uttered the cry," said the King; "but I can inform you what is meant by the noise. Do you know that I am to be executed outside of this window?" said Charles, pointing to the gloomy and deserted square, peopled only by soldiers and sentinels.

"Yes, Sire," said Aramis, "I know it."

"Well, those beams and planks just brought are for my scaffold. Some workman must have been injured while unloading them."

Aramis shuddered in spite of himself.

"You can see," continued Charles, "that it is useless for you to persist any longer. I am condemned: let me submit to my fate."

"Sire," said Aramis, resuming that tranquillity which had for a moment been disturbed, "they may erect a scaffold, but they cannot find an executioner."

"What do you mean?" demanded the king.

"That at this very moment the executioner is either carried off or bribed. To-morrow the scaffold will be ready, but the executioner will be missing; so the execution will be deferred till the following day."

"Well, what then?" said the King.

"Well, then," replied Aramis, "to-morrow night we shall carry you off!"

"How so?" exclaimed the King, whose countenance was involuntarily illumined with a gleam of joy.

"Oh, sir," murmured Parry, with hands clasped, "may you be blessed, both you and yours!"

"But how will you do it?" repeated the King; "I ought to know, that, if necessary, I may second your efforts."

"I do not know as yet, Sire," replied Aramis. "But the skilfulest, the bravest, and the most devoted of our party said, on leaving me, 'Chevalier, tell the King that to-morrow, at ten o'clock at night, we shall carry him off.'. And as he has said it, he will do it."

"Tell me the name of this generous friend," said the King, "that, whether he succeeds or not, I may cherish for him an eternal gratitude."

"D'Artagnan, Sire, — the same who was on the point of saving you when Colonel Harrison entered so inopportunely."

"You are really wonderful men," said the King. "Had I been merely told of such things, I should not have believed them."

"Now, Sire," continued Aramis, "listen to me. Do not forget for one single moment that we are watching for your safety. The slightest gesture, the slightest tune, the slightest sign of those who may approach you, — watch everything, listen to everything, remark everything."

"Oh, Chevalier!" cried the King, "what can I say to you? No words can express my heartfelt gratitude. Should you succeed, I will not tell you that you will save a King, — no; in

ght of the scaffold, royalty is, I swear, of little value in my es, — but you will preserve a husband for his wife, a father r his children. Chevalier, take my hand: it is that of a iend, who will love you till he breathes his last sigh."

Aramis wished to kiss the King's hand, but Charles seized s and pressed it to his heart.

At this moment a man entered, without even knocking at e door. Aramis wished to withdraw his hand, but the King tained it.

He who entered was one of those Puritans — half priest, lf soldier — such as swarmed around Cromwell.

"What do you want, sir?" said the King.

"I want to know whether Charles Stuart's confession is ished," said the intruder.

"What does that signify to you?" said the King; "we are t of the same religion."

"All men are brethren," said the Puritan. "One of my ethren is soon to die, and I am come to exhort him to die operly."

"Enough," said Parry. "The King has nothing to do with ur exhortations."

"Sire," said Aramis, in a low tone, "humour him; he is ubtless some spy."

"After the reverend Bishop," said the King, "I will hear u with pleasure, sir."

The man left the room with a scowling look, but not with- t regarding Juxon with an earnestness that did not escape e King's notice.

"Chevalier," said he, when the door was closed, "I believe at you were right, and that this man came here with bad tentions. Take care, when you retire, that some misfortune es not befall you."

"I thank your Majesty," said Aramis, "but do not distress urself; under this robe I wear a coat of mail and a dagger."

"Go then, sir, and may God take you under his sacred otection, as I used to say when I was King."

Aramis left the room, Charles himself accompanying him to e threshold. Aramis pronounced his blessing, which made e guards bow, passed majestically through the antechambers, lled with soldiers, reëntered his carriage, into which his two ards followed him, and returned to the episcopal residence, here they left him.

Juxon was waiting with anxiety.

"Well?" said he, on seeing Aramis.

"Everything has succeeded as I wished," replied Aramis. "Spies, guards, followers, all took me for you, and the King blesses you, in expectation of your blessing."

"God protect you, my son, for your example has given me both hope and courage."

Aramis resumed his own dress and his cloak, and left the house, informing Juxon that he should once more have recourse to him.

Scarcely had he gone ten paces in the street before he perceived that he was followed by a man wrapped up in a large cloak. He put his hand to his poignard, and stopped. The man came straight up to him: it was Porthos.

"My dear friend!" said Aramis, holding out his hand to him.

"You know, my dear fellow," said Porthos, "that each had his commission. Mine was to guard you, and I was doing so. Have you seen the King?"

"Yes, and all goes on well. Now where are our friends?"

"We are to meet them at the inn at eleven o'clock."

"Then we have no time to lose," said Aramis.

In fact, it was striking half-past ten at St. Paul's.

Yet, as the two friends exerted themselves, they arrived first.

After them came Athos.

"Everything is going on well," said he, not giving his friends time to question him.

"What have you done?" inquired Aramis.

"I have hired a small felucca, sharp as a canoe and swift as a swallow. It is waiting for us at Greenwich, opposite the Isle of Dogs, and is manned by a master and four men, who, in consideration of fifty pounds, will be at our disposal for three nights running. Once on board with the King, we will take advantage of the tide, will descend the Thames, and in two hours will be at sea. Then, like true pirates, we will hug the shore, we will camp out on the cliffs, or, if the sea be open for us, we will make for Boulogne. In case I should be killed, remember that the captain's name is Roger, and that of the vessel 'The Thunderbolt.' By these signs you will recognise each other. A handkerchief knotted at the four corners is the signal."

A moment after D'Artagnan returned.

"Empty your pockets," said he, "for a hundred pounds, for as for mine" —

And he turned out his own, which were absolutely empty.

The sum was instantly made up; D'Artagnan left the room, but returned in a few minutes.

"There," said he, "it is accomplished, although it was not without difficulty."

"Has the executioner left London?" asked Athos.

"No, indeed, that would not have been safe enough; he might have gone out by one gate and come back by another."

"But where is he?" asked Athos.

"In the cellar!"

"In what cellar?"

"In our landlord's cellar. Mousqueton is seated on the threshold, and here is the key."

"Bravo!" cried Aramis. "But how did you persuade this man to disappear?"

"As every one in this world is persuaded — by money. It cost me dear, but he consented."

"How much has it cost you, my friend?" said Athos; "for you understand, now that we are no longer altogether poor Musketeers without hearth or dwelling, all expenses should be borne by us in common."

"It cost me twelve thousand francs," replied D'Artagnan.

"And where did you find them?" asked Athos. "Did you have such a sum?"

"The Queen's famous diamond!" said D'Artagnan, with a sigh.

"Ah! that is true," said Aramis; "I noticed it on your finger."

"So you bought it back from M. des Essarts, did you?" said Porthos.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "but it is written in heaven that I am not to keep it. Diamonds, like men, must have their sympathies and antipathies; and this diamond seems to detest me."

"Well, then," said Athos, "so far as regards the executioner, everything is all right; but, unfortunately, every executioner has his assistant, his servant, or whatever you may call him."

"And this man also has his; but there we are equally fortunate."

"How so?"

"At the very moment that I imagined I had yet another bargain to make, the fellow was brought in with a broken thigh. From excess of zeal, he must needs accompany the wagon that carried the beams and planks under the King's window; one of those beams fell on his leg and broke it."

"Ah!" said Aramis, "then it must have been this man who uttered the cry that I heard from the King's room."

"Probably," answered D'Artagnan. "But, as he is a very careful man, he promised, as he was carried away, to send in his place four expert and skilful workmen, to assist those who are already engaged; and on returning to his master's, wounded as he was, he instantly wrote to Master Tom Low, a carpenter of his acquaintance, to betake himself to Whitehall. Here is the letter, which he sent by a messenger who gave it to me for a louis."

"And what the devil do you mean to do with this letter?" asked Athos.

"Can you not guess?" said D'Artagnan, his eyes sparkling with intelligence.

"No, 'pon my soul."

"Well then, my dear Athos, you, who speak English like John Bull himself, you are Master Tom Low, and we are your three companions. Do you understand now?"

Athos uttered a cry of joy and admiration, ran to a wardrobe and drew from it some workmen's clothes, which the four friends immediately put on; then they left the hotel, Athos carrying a saw, Porthos a crowbar, Aramis a hatchet, and D'Artagnan a hammer and nails.

The letter of the executioner's assistant satisfied the master carpenter that they were really the persons he expected.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE WORKMEN.

About the middle of the night Charles heard a great noise under his window: it was the hammer and the hatchet pounding, the crowbar wrenching, and the saw creaking.

As he had thrown himself wholly dressed on his bed, and was just beginning to sleep, this noise awoke him with a

rt ; and as, independent of its actual clamour, this noise
nd a terrible moral echo in his soul, the frightful thoughts
the evening again began to assail him. Alone, facing the
kness and desolation, he had not the courage to support
fresh torture which he had not anticipated as a portion of
punishment, and he ordered Parry to request the sentinel
entreat the workmen not to pound so violently, and to pity
last sleep of him who had been their King.
The sentinel was unwilling to leave his post, but he allowed
rry to pass.
Having proceeded round the palace until he reached the
ndow, Parry observed, on a level with the balcony, from
ich they had removed the railings, a large unfinished
ffold, over which the workmen were now beginning to
ten a drapery of black serge.
This scaffold, raised to the height of the window, and about
enty feet from the ground, had two lower stages. Although
sight was hateful to him, Parry looked among the eight
ten workmen who were erecting this gloomy structure, to
d those whose noise was likely to be most unpleasant to the
ng; and on the upper platform he saw two men who, by
ans of a crowbar, were unfastening the last fixtures of the
n balustrade. One of them, a perfect Colossus, was per-
ming his task like one of those ancient battering rams
ployed to beat down walls. At each blow of his instru-
nt, showers of stone flew about. The other, who was on his
ees, drew away the broken stones.
It was evident that these were the men who made the noise
which the King complained.
Parry mounted the ladder and went up to them.
"My friends," said he, "will you work a little more gently,
pray you? The King is weary, and is in great need of
pose."
The man who was using the crowbar stopped and turned
lf round; but as he was standing Parry could not distin-
ish his features, obscured as they were by the darkness,
nich was greater at the top of the scaffold.
The man who was on his knees also turned, and as he was
wer down than his companion, and his countenance was
hted by the lantern, Parry could see him.
This man looked earnestly at him, and put his finger to his
s.

Parry started back in amazement.

"Very well, very well," said the workman, in excellent English; "go back and tell the King that if he sleeps badly to-night, he will sleep better to-morrow night."

These rude words, which taken in their literal sense bore such a dreadful meaning, were received by the workmen employed on the lower stage, and around, with horrid shouts of laughter.

Parry returned, almost convinced that he was in a dream.

Charles was waiting impatiently for him.

At the moment that he entered, the sentinel put his head in at the door to see what the King was doing.

Charles was leaning on his elbow.

Parry closed the door, and going up to the King, with his countenance radiant with joy:

"Sire," said he, in a low voice, "do you know who these workmen are who are making such a noise?"

"No," said Charles, with a melancholy shake of the head; "how do you think I should know that? Do I know those men?"

"Sire," answered Parry, in a still lower tone, and stooping down to his master's bed, — "Sire, it is the Comte de la Fère and his companions."

"Who are erecting the scaffold?" exclaimed the astonished King.

"Yes; and who, while erecting it, are also making a hole in the wall."

"Hush!" said the King, giving a terrified glance around him; "did you see them?"

"I spoke to them."

The King clasped his hands and raised his eyes to heaven. Then, after a short and fervent prayer, he threw himself off his bed and went to the window, pushing aside the curtains. The sentinels were still on the balcony; beyond, a dark platform was perceptible, on which shadow-like figures were moving.

Charles could distinguish nothing, but he felt under his feet the vibration of the blows which his friends were striking, and each of these blows now found a responsive echo in his heart.

Parry was not mistaken. He had really seen Athos. He was engaged, with Porthos, in forming a hole in which one of the cross-beams was to rest.

This hole communicated with the royal chamber by a hollow ace formed under its flooring. Once in this cavity, which newhat resembled a low, intermediate story, it would be acticable, with a crowbar and a good pair of shoulders (and : the latter they relied upon Porthos), to remove a plank of e flooring. The King would then glide through this open-g, and having reached those parts of the scaffold that were vered with black cloth would there muffle himself up in a rkman's dress which they had prepared for him, and with-t affectation or fear would descend with the four friends.

The sentinels, seeing only the workmen who had been ouring on the scaffold, and having no reason to suspect em, would allow them to pass.

The felucca, as we have said before, was in readiness.

This plan was bold and yet simple and easy, as all things e that spring from hardy courage.

So Athos was tearing his delicate white hands by removing e stones that Porthos removed from the wall. He could eady pass his head under the architectural ornaments that corated the brackets of the balcony. In two hours more he uld be able to pass his whole body, and before daylight the le would be made, and would be concealed behind the folds an interior hanging which D'Artagnan would fix there.

Artagnan had passed himself off as a French workman, and is putting in his nails with the regularity of a professed holsterer. Aramis was cutting off the surplus of the serge, hich hung down to the ground, concealing the woodwork of e scaffold.

Daylight was just appearing on the top of the houses. A rge fire of turf and coals had enabled the workmen to pass is cold night of January 29th; but every moment some, even the most diligent, left off to go and warm themselves. thos and Porthos alone had not quitted their work. So by e first light of the morning the opening was completed. thos entered it, carrying with him the clothes destined for e King, wrapped up in a remnant of black serge. Porthos nded him his crowbar, and D'Artagnan nailed on the inte-or hanging of serge, a piece of extravagance that was very eat, but very necessary; it hid the opening and the man ho had gone into it.

Athos required only two hours' more labour to enter into mmunication with the King; and from the previous arrange-

ments made by the four friends, they anticipated that they had the whole day before them, since as the executioner was absent they would have to send to Bristol for another.

D'Artagnan went to resume his chestnut-coloured dress, and Porthos his red doublet. Aramis repaired to Juxon's, in order to get to the King in his company.

All three agreed to meet in front of Whitehall at mid-day, to observe what would happen there.

Before he left the scaffold Aramis went to the opening where Athos was concealed, to inform him that he was going to try to see the King again.

"Adieu, then, and be of good courage," said Athos. "Tell the King how affairs stand, and say that when he is alone he must knock on the floor to intimate that I may safely continue my proceedings. If Parry could assist me by unloosening the hearth-stone of the fireplace, which doubtless is a marble slab, it would be so much accomplished. Aramis, do your best not to leave the King. Speak loud, very loud, for you will be heard at the door. Should there be a sentinel in the room, kill him without hesitation; should there be two, Parry must kill one and you the other; should there be three, allow yourself to be killed, but save the King."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," said Aramis; "I will take two poignards, that I may give one to Parry. Is that all?"

"Yes — go; but conjure the King not to be led away by false generosity. Should there be a combat, he must fly while you are fighting. The slab being replaced over his head, and you, dead or alive, on the slab, it will take at least ten minutes to find the opening by which he has escaped. During these ten minutes we shall have gone some distance and the King will be saved."

"All shall be done as you say, Athos. Your hand; for perhaps we shall never meet again."

Athos threw his arm over Aramis's neck and kissed him.

"That is for you," said he. "Now, if I should die, tell D'Artagnan that I love him as a son, and embrace him for me. Embrace also our good and brave Porthos. Adieu!"

"Adieu!" responded Aramis. "I am now as certain that the King will escape as that I hold the most loyal hand in the whole world."

Aramis left Athos, went down from the scaffold, and turned

his inn, whistling the air of a song in praise of Cromwell. e found his two friends established near a good fire, drinking bottle of port wine and devouring a cold fowl. Porthos, as e ate, was all the time growling forth violent abuse against ie infamous Parliamentarians. D'Artagnan was eating in lence, but his mind was actively engaged in forming the ost audacious plans.

Aramis told him everything that had been agreed on. D'Artagnan expressed his approval by a nod and Porthos by his oice.

"Bravo!" said he. "Besides, we shall be there at the very ioment of the escape. It is very easy to conceal one's self under iat scaffold, and there we can be. What with D'Artagnan, iyself, Grimaud, and Mousqueton, we shall very well kill ight. I do not speak of Blaisois, as he is only fit to take care f the horses. At two minutes a man, that is four minutes; Iousqueton will lose one minute — that will make five; and uring those five minutes you can have made a quarter of a ague."

Aramis hastily swallowed a mouthful of food, drank a glass f wine, and changed his dress.

"Now," said he, "I am going to the Bishop's. Take care) get the arms ready, Porthos; watch over your executioner, 'Artagnan."

"Be quite easy on that score. Grimaud has relieved Mousueton, and is now stationed over him."

"Nevertheless, redouble your vigilance, and do not remain iactive one single moment."

"Inactive? My dear, ask Porthos; I am almost dead. I m perpetually on my legs; I have the gait of a dancing-iaster. Mordioux! how I love France just now; and what a ne thing it is to have a country of one's own when one gets i so badly in that of others!"

Aramis left them as he left Athos — that is to say, after ibracing them. He then went to Bishop Juxon's, to whom he iade his request. Juxon consented the more readily to take .ramis with him, because he had already anticipated that he iould require a priest, as the King would certainly wish to ake the communion, and probably might wish to hear a Mass.

Dressed in the same robes that had been worn by Aramis ie evening before, the Bishop entered his coach. Aramis, ven more disguised by his pallor and sorrow than by his

deacon's costume, got into the coach with him. The coach reached Whitehall about nine o'clock in the morning. Nothing appeared changed: the antechambers and corridors were full of guards, as on the previous evening; two sentinels kept guard at the King's door, and two others were marching up and down before the balcony, on the platform of the scaffold where the block was already placed.

The King was full of hope; on seeing Aramis again, this hope changed into joy. He kissed Juxon, he shook Aramis's hand. The Bishop, in a loud voice, that all might hear, spoke of the interview he had with the King the evening before. The King replied that the words he had spoken at that interview had produced their effect, and that he wished for another private conversation. Juxon turned to the attendants and requested them to leave him alone with the King.

Every one retired; and when the door was closed:

"Sire," said Aramis quickly, "you are saved! The London executioner has disappeared; his assistant broke his leg last night under your Majesty's window; the cry we heard proceeded from him. They have doubtless already discovered the absence of the executioner; but there is not another nearer than Bristol, and it will take some time to send for him. So we have till to-morrow, at least."

"But the Comte de la Fère?" asked the King.

"He is only two feet from you, Sire. Take the poker, strike three blows, and you will hear his answer."

The King took the instrument with a trembling hand, and struck three blows at regular intervals. Instantly some blows, dull and measured, responding to the signal, were heard beneath the floor.

"Therefore," said the King, "he who answers me there"—

"Is the Comte de la Fère, Sire," replied Aramis. "He is preparing the way by which your Majesty is to escape. Parry, on his side, will raise that marble slab, and a passage will be completely opened."

"But," said Parry, "I have no instrument."

"Take this poignard," said Aramis; "only take care not to blunt it too much, for you may have need of it to penetrate something besides stone."

"Oh, Juxon!" said Charles, turning to the Bishop and taking both his hands,—"Juxon, remember the prayer of him who was your King!"

ho is so still, and always will be," said Juxon, kissing ng's hand.
ay all your life for this gentleman, whom you see — for ıer, whom you hear under our feet — and also for two who, wherever they may be, are, I am sure, watching ıy safety."
'e," replied Juxon, "you shall be obeyed. Every day, ; as I live, a prayer shall be offered to God for these l friends of your Majesty's."
miner continued his labour for some time longer, and heard drawing nearer every moment. But suddenly xpected noise was heard in the gallery. Aramis seized ter and gave the signal of interruption.
noise drew near; a number of equal and measured vere heard. The four men remained motionless; all ere fixed upon the door, which opened slowly and with of solemnity.
rds were formed in line in the room that led into the . A Parliamentary commissioner, clothed in black and n ill-omened gravity, entered, bowed to the King, and, ing a parchment, read his sentence, as is usually done ıinals who are about to be led to the scaffold.
hat does this mean ? " asked Aramis.
)n made a gesture signifying that he was as completely ıt as himself.
, then, it is for this very day ? " asked the King, with ıtion only perceptible to Juxon and Aramis.
ere you not apprised that it was for this morning ? " the man in black.
ıd," said the King, " am I to die, like a common crimi- the hands of the London executioner ? "
e London executioner has disappeared, sir," replied the nentary commissioner; " but a man has offered himself stead. The execution will therefore only be delayed time that you may require to settle your temporal and al affairs."
ight perspiration that bedewed the roots of Charles's as the only indication he gave of any emotion on hear- s intelligence.
Aramis became livid. His heart ceased to beat; he s eyes and rested his hand on a table. On seeing this nd grief, Charles seemed to forget his own.

He went up to him, took his hand, and kissed him.

"Come, my friend," said he, with a soft, melancholy smile, 'take courage."

Then, turning towards the commissioner:

"Sir," said he, "I am ready. I want only two things, that will not delay you long, I think: the first is, to receive the Sacrament; the second, to kiss my children, and to take a last farewell of them. Will that be permitted?"

"Yes, sir," replied the commissioner.

And he left the room.

Aramis, having recovered himself, dug his nails into his flesh, and a heavy groan issued from his bosom.

"Oh, monsignor," said he, seizing Juxon's hands, "where is God? Where is God?"

"My son," replied the Bishop, with great firmness, "you do not see Him, because earthly passions conceal Him."

"My friend," said the King to Aramis, "do not thus give way to despair. You ask what God is doing? God is looking down on your devotion and my martyrdom; and, believe me, both will have their reward. Attribute, therefore, what happens to man, and not to God. It is men who cause my death — it is men who make you weep."

"Yes, Sire," said Aramis, "you are right: I must attribute this to men; and I will make men responsible for it."

"Sit down, Juxon," said the King, falling on his knees, "for you must receive my confession. Remain, sir," he continued, addressing Aramis, who was about to retire, — "remain, Parry; I have nothing, even in the secrecy of penitence, that I would not say before all; and I have only one regret, which is that the whole world cannot hear, as you do."

Juxon sat down, and the King, kneeling before him like the humblest of the faithful, began his confession.

CHAPTER LXX.

REMEMBER!

When the King had ended his confession, he partook of the Holy Communion, and then asked to see his children. It was striking ten o'clock; therefore, as the King had said, the *delay had not* been great.

Yet the people were already gathered. They knew that ten
clock was the time fixed for the execution; the streets near
ıe palace were crowded; and the King began to distinguish
ıat distant roar made by a multitude and by the ocean, when
ıe one is agitated by its passions and the other by its storms.

The King's children arrived — first the Princess Charlotte,
ıen the Duke of Gloucester: that is to say, a little fair girl,
retty and with eyes bathed in tears; and a young boy be-
veen eight and nine years of age, whose dry eyes and disdain-
ılly pouting lip denoted growing pride. The boy had been
eeping all night, but before all these spectators he shed no
ar.

Charles felt his heart melt within him at the sight of these
vo children, whom he had not seen for two years, and whom
e now saw only as he was just going to die. Tears started
ıto his eyes, and he turned round to wipe them away; for he
ished to be firm before those to whom he bequeathed such a
eighty inheritance of suffering and woe.

He spoke first to the little girl, drawing her to him; he
horted her to piety, resignation, and filial love. He then
ok the Duke of Gloucester, and seating him on his knee, that
e might at the same time press him to his heart and kiss his
ce:

"My son," said he to him, "in coming here you saw many
eople, both in the streets and ante-rooms. These people are
ing to cut off your father's head. Never forget it. Some
ıy, perhaps, seeing that they have you in their power, they
ay wish to make you King, to the exclusion of your elder
others, the Prince of Wales, who is in France, or the Duke
York, who is I know not where. But you are not the King,
y son, and you cannot become so except by their death.
wear to me, therefore, that you will not let the crown be put
ı your head, until you have a legitimate right to it; for one
ay — heed me well, my son — one day, if you did that, head
ıd crown would both fall, and on that day you could not die
calm and so free from remorse as I now shall die. Swear
ıis, my son."

The child stretched out his little hand, put it into his fath-
's, and said:

"Sire, I swear to your Majesty" —

Charles interrupted him.

"Henry," said he, "call me father."

"Father," replied the child, "I swear that they shall kill me before they shall make me King."

"Very well, my son," said Charles; "now kiss me, and you also, Charlotte, and never forget me."

"Oh, no! never! never!" cried the children, clasping their arms round their father's neck.

"Farewell!" said Charles — "farewell, my children! Take them away, Juxon: their tears will leave me no courage to die."

Juxon tore the poor children from their father's arms, and gave them back to those who had brought them.

The door now remained open, and any one might enter.

The King, seeing himself alone in the midst of guards and inquisitive persons who began to invade the room, remembered that the Comte de la Fère was close by him, under the floor of the room without being able to see him, and yet perhaps still hoping.

He was afraid that the slightest noise might be mistaken by him for a signal, and that, by resuming his work, he might betray himself. He therefore remained quiet, and, by his example, kept all his attendants in the same state.

The King was not deceived; Athos was really under his feet. He was listening; he was in despair at not hearing the signal; he more than once began in his impatience to chip the stone; and then, apprehensive of being heard, instantly stopped again.

This dreadful inaction lasted for two hours; a death-like silence reigned in the King's room.

Athos now resolved to ascertain the cause of this gloomy and portentous calm, which was broken only by the mighty murmur of the crowd. He partially opened the drapery that concealed the hole, and descended to the first stage of the scaffold. Above his head, and scarcely four inches from him, was the flooring laid on a level with the platform of the balcony, and making the scaffold.

That noise which he had till then heard but indistinctly, and which now came upon him gloomy and threatening, made him start with terror. He went to the edge of the scaffold, slightly drew aside the black serge on a level with his eye, and beheld horsemen drawn up close to the terrible construction; beyond the horsemen was a file of halberdiers; beyond these, the Musketeers; and beyond them, the first ranks of the *people, who,* like the dark ocean, heaved and roared.

"What can have happened?" said Athos to himself, trembling more violently than the crêpe the folds of which he was crumpling. "The people are pressing forward, the soldiers are under arms, and among the spectators, all of whom have their eyes fixed on the window, I see D'Artagnan. What is he waiting for? What is he looking at? Great God! can they have allowed the executioner to escape?"

Suddenly the drum beat discordantly and funereally above the place; the noise of heavy continuous steps resounded over his head. It seemed to him that something like a vast procession was trampling on the floors of Whitehall; soon he heard the planks of the scaffold also creaking above him. He cast another look without; and the aspect of the mighty throng instantly dispelled the last ray of hope that had remained at the bottom of his heart.

The murmur of the crowd had altogether ceased. All eyes were fixed on the window. Men with mouths half open, and bated breath, indicated the expectation of some dreadful spectacle.

The noise of steps which, from the place he then occupied under the floor of the King's room, Athos had heard above his head was renewed on the scaffold, which bent so much under the weight that the planks almost touched the head of the unhappy gentleman. It was evident that two files of soldiers were taking up their position.

At the same moment a voice well known to him, a noble voice, pronounced these words above his head:

"Colonel, I wish to address the people."

Athos shuddered from head to foot. It was indeed the King who was on the scaffold.

In fact, after having drunk some drops of wine and eaten a morsel of bread, Charles, weary of waiting for death, had suddenly determined to go and meet it, and had given the signal to proceed.

The folding sashes of the window were thrown open, and from the extremity of the vast apartment the people could perceive, silently advancing, first a masked man, whom they recognised as the executioner by the axe that he held in his hand. This man advanced to the block and laid the axe on it.

This was the first noise that Athos had heard.

Behind this man came Charles Stuart, pale, but calm and walking with a firm step. He was attended by two priests,

and followed by the officials, whose duty it was to preside over the execution, and escorted by two files of halberdiers, who ranged themselves on each side of the scaffold.

The sight of the man with the mask excited a prolonged murmur. Every one was anxious to ascertain who this unknown executioner was, who had offered himself so opportunely, and thus enabled the people to witness, on the appointed day, the dreadful spectacle which they supposed would have been deferred till the morrow. Every one, therefore, actually devoured him with their eyes; but all they could perceive was that he was a man of middle height, clothed in black, and who appeared to be of a mature age, as the end of a grizzly beard fell below the mask that concealed his face.

But at sight of the King, so calm, so noble, so dignified, silence was instantaneously restored, and every one could hear the wish he had expressed to address the people.

This request had doubtless been granted by him to whom it was addressed; for, in a firm and sonorous voice which vibrated even to the inmost recesses of Athos's heart, the King began to speak, explaining his conduct to the people, and giving them advice for the benefit of England.

"Oh," murmured Athos to himself, "is it possible that what I hear and see is real? Is it possible that God has thus abandoned His representative on earth, to permit him to die so wretchedly? And I have not seen him — I have not even taken leave of him!"

A noise was heard, as if the instrument of death had been moved on the block.

The King paused.

"Do not touch the axe," he said; and he resumed his address at the point where he had broken off.

At the conclusion of the speech, there was a solemn silence above the Count's head. He held his hand to his temples, and, though the cold was intense, big drops of perspiration trickled through his fingers.

That silence indicated the final preparations.

The King cast a glance full of commiseration on the assembled throng, and taking off the order he wore, which was the diamond star that the Queen had sent him, he gave it to the priest who accompanied Juxon. He then drew from his bosom a small diamond cross, which had also come from Henrietta.

"Sir," said he, addressing the priest, "I will keep this cross

in my hand, even to the last moment; when I am dead, you will take it from me."

"Yes, Sire," said a voice which Athos recognised as Aramis's.

Charles, who had hitherto kept his head covered, now took off his hat and threw it down near him; he next unloosened one by one the buttons of his doublet, took it off, and threw it down near his hat; and then, as it was cold, he asked for his dressing-gown, which was given him.

All these preparations were made with frightful calmness. It might have been supposed that the King was going to lie down in his bed, and not in his coffin.

Raising his hair with his hands: "Will this trouble you, sir?" he said to the executioner; "in that case it can be confined by a string."

Charles accompanied these words with a look that seemed as if it wished to penetrate the mask of the unknown. That look, so noble, so calm, and so resolved, compelled the executioner to turn away his head; but in eluding the deep and searching gaze of the King, he encountered the fiery glance of Aramis.

The King, finding that he did not answer, repeated his question.

"It will suffice," replied the man, in a hoarse voice, "if you will remove it from your neck."

The King parted his hair with both his hands. Then looking at the block: "This block is very low," said he; "is there not a higher one?"

"It is the common block," replied the masked man.

"Do you think that you can cut off my head with one blow?" asked the King.

"I hope so," replied the executioner.

There was such a strange intonation in these three words, "*I hope so*," that all who heard them shuddered, except the King.

"That is well," said he calmly. "And now, executioner, listen to me."

The man took one step toward the King, and leaned on his axe.

"I do not wish you to take me by surprise," said Charles. "I shall kneel down to pray, but you must not then strike."

"And when shall I strike?" asked the masked man.

"When I lay my head upon the block and stretch out my hand, saying '*Remember!*' then strike boldly."

The man in the mask slightly inclined his head.

"The time has come for me to leave this world," said the King to those around him. "Gentlemen, I leave you in the midst of the tempest, and precede you to that country where storms are never known. Farewell!"

He looked at Aramis and gave him a special sign with his head.

"Now, sir," said he, "draw back from me, I beg of you, and let me pray in a low voice. Do you also draw back," he said to the executioner; "it will be but for a moment, and I know that I belong to you. Only remember not to strike me before I give you the signal."

Charles knelt down, made the sign of the cross, and put his lips to the boards as if he wished to kiss the platform; then laying one hand on the floor and the other on the block:

"Comte de la Fère," he said in French, "are you there, and can I speak to you?"

That voice struck straight to Athos's heart, and pierced it like steel.

"Yes, your Majesty," he replied, in a trembling voice.

"O faithful friend, generous heart!" said the King, "I could not be saved. It was not to be. Now, at the risk of sacrilege, I will speak to you. Yes, I have spoken to men — I have spoken to God; I now speak to you last of all. For supporting a cause that I considered sacred, I have lost the throne of my fathers and diverted the heritage of my children. One million in gold remains, which I buried in the cellars of the castle at Newcastle, just before I left that town. You alone know that this money exists; make use of it, then, whenever you think it may be most useful to my eldest son. And now, Comte de la Fère, bid me adieu."

"Adieu, Majesty, saint, and martyr!" stammered Athos, frozen with horror.

There was then a moment's silence, during which Athos fancied that the King arose and changed his position.

Then, in a voice full and sonorous, so that not only could it be heard on the scaffold, but far beyond amid the throng:

"*Remember!*" said the King.

He had scarcely finished the word before a terrible blow shook the flooring of the scaffold. The dust arose from the drapery, blinding Athos; but suddenly, as by a mechanical

movement he raised his eyes and his head, a warm drop fell upon his forehead. Athos recoiled with a shudder of horror, and at the same moment the drops changed into a black cascade which gushed across the boards.

Athos fell on his knees, and stayed there as if struck with madness and utter helplessness. But he soon became aware, by the receding murmur, that the crowd was departing. He remained a minute or two longer, motionless and in silent despair. Then he regained his fortitude so far as to be able to dip the end of his handkerchief in the blood of the royal martyr. And, as the crowd was diminishing more and more, he descended, cut through the serge, slipped between two horses, mingled with the people, whose dress he wore, and was the first to reach the tavern.

On going up to his apartment and looking into a glass, he saw his forehead marked with a large red spot. He put his hand to it, drew it back smeared with the King's blood, and fainted away.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE MAN WITH THE MASK.

ALTHOUGH it was only four o'clock in the afternoon it was already dark, and icy snow was falling fast.

Aramis was the next to return, and found Athos, if not insensible, at least prostrated.

At the first words spoken by his friend, the Count awoke from the species of lethargy into which he had fallen.

"Well," said Aramis, "we were conquered by fate!"

"Conquered!" said Athos. "Noble and unfortunate King!"

"Are you wounded?" inquired Aramis.

"No; this blood is his."

The Count wiped his brow.

"Where were you, then?"

"Where you left me — under the scaffold."

"And you saw everything?"

"No, but I heard everything. God preserve me from such another hour as I passed there! Has not my hair turned white?"

"You know, then, that I did not leave him?"

"I heard your voice until the very last moment."

"Here is the star that he gave me," said Aramis, "and the cross that I took from his hand. He desired them to be returned to the Queen."

"And here is a handkerchief to wrap them in," said Athos. And he drew from his pocket the handkerchief he had dipped in the King's blood.

"And now," said Athos, "what have they done with the poor body?"

"By Cromwell's orders, regal honours have been paid to it. We placed it in a leaden coffin; the physicians are now engaged in embalming the unfortunate remains; and when they have finished, the King will be laid in an illuminated chapel."

"Mockery!" murmured Athos gloomily. "Regal honours to him they have murdered!"

"That proves," said Aramis, "that the King dies, but that royalty never dies."

"Alas!" said Athos, "he is perhaps the last knightly King that the world will see."

"Come, come, do not give way to despair, Count," said a gruff voice; it was Porthos, whose heavy step was now heard on the stairs. "We are all mortal, my poor friends."

"You come back late, my dear Porthos," said the Comte de la Fère.

"Yes," answered Porthos, "there were people in my way who retarded me. They were dancing, the wretches! I took one of them by the neck, and I fancy that I almost throttled him. A patrol came up at the moment, but, fortunately, the man with whom I was particularly engaged could not speak. So I took advantage of his silence, and turned aside into a little street which led to one still smaller, and there I lost myself. As I do not know London and cannot speak English, I imagined that I should never find my way again, but at last here I am."

"But have you not seen D'Artagnan?" said Aramis. "Can anything have happened to him?"

"We were separated by the crowd," answered Porthos, "and, in spite of all my endeavours, I could not rejoin him."

"Oh!" said Athos bitterly, "I saw him. He was in the

first rank of the crowd, admirably situated to lose nothing; and as, after all, the sight was interesting, he no doubt wished to see it to the end."

"Oh! Comte de la Fère," said an unruffled voice, although somewhat affected by the exertion of running, "can it really be that you culumniate the absent?"

This reproach touched Athos's heart. Nevertheless, as the sensation he had experienced on beholding D'Artagnan in the first ranks of this ferocious and besotted people was deep and painful, he contented himself with replying:

"I do not calumniate you, my friend. They were anxious about you here, and I told them where you were. You did not know King Charles; to you he was only a stranger, and you were not obliged to love him."

And on uttering these words, he held out his hand to his friend. But D'Artagnan pretended not to perceive it, and kept his own hand under his cloak.

Athos then allowed his to fall slowly by his side.

"Ouf! I am tired," said D'Artagnan; and he sat down.

"Drink a glass of port," said Aramis, taking a bottle from the table and filling a glass; "drink that; it will refresh you."

"Yes, let us drink," said Athos, seeing the Gascon's displeasure, and wishing to touch his glass with his own, "let us drink and leave this abominable country. The felucca is waiting for us, you know. Let us depart this very evening; we have now nothing more to do here."

"You are in a great hurry, Monsieur le Comte," said D'Artagnan.

"This bloody soil burns my feet," replied Athos.

"The snow has not that effect on me," said the Gascon.

"But what would you have us do?" asked Athos, "now that the King is dead?"

"So, Monsieur le Comte," replied D'Artagnan carelessly, "you do not see that anything remains for you to do in England?"

"Nothing — nothing," said Athos, "except to doubt the Divine goodness, and to despise my own powers."

"Well, then," said D'Artagnan, "I — a pitiful, sanguinary fool, who went and took my place thirty steps from the scaffold, that I might the better see the beheading of that King whom I did not know, and who was, it seems, indifferent to me — I think differently from the Count. I remain."

Athos turned extremely pale; every one of his friend's reproaches vibrated to the inmost recesses of his heart.

"What! you remain in London?" said Porthos to D'Artagnan.

"Yes," said he. "And you?"

"Well," said Porthos, somewhat embarrassed before Athos and Aramis, "if you remain, as I came with you I will not go back without you. I will not leave you alone in this abominable country."

"Thank you, my excellent friend. Then I have a little enterprise to propose to you. It came into my head while I was looking at the spectacle just mentioned. We will execute it together when Monsieur le Comte is gone."

"What is it?" said Porthos.

"It is to find out the name of that masked man who offered himself so obligingly to cut off the King's head."

"A man with a mask!" exclaimed Athos. "So you did not let the executioner escape?"

"The executioner?" said D'Artagnan; "he is still in the cellar, where, I presume, he is holding an interesting conversation with some of our host's bottles. But you remind me"—

He went to the door.

"Mousqueton!" he cried.

"Sir?" replied a voice that appeared to issue from the depths of the earth.

"Liberate your prisoner," replied D'Artagnan; "all is over."

"But," said Athos, "who then is the miscreant who laid hands on the King?"

"An amateur executioner," replied Aramis, "who, however, handles the axe with great facility; for, as *he hoped*, it took him only one blow."

"Did you not see his face?" inquired Athos.

"He wore a mask," replied D'Artagnan.

"But you who were near him, Aramis?"

"I only saw a grizzly beard which descended below his mask."

"So he is a man of mature age," said Athos.

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "that indicates nothing. When any one puts on a mask, he can easily put on a beard too."

"I am sorry that I did not follow him," said Porthos.

"Well then, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "that was exactly the idea that entered my mind"

Athos now comprehended all. He stood up. "Pardon me, D'Artagnan!" said he; "I doubted God; therefore I might easily doubt you. Pardon me, my friend!"

"We will see about that presently," answered D'Artagnan, with a half smile.

"Well, then," said Aramis.

"Well," continued D'Artagnan, "while I was looking, not at the King, as the Count thinks (for I know what it is to see a man die, and although I ought to be habituated to such sights, they always make me feel ill), but at the masked executioner, the idea suggested itself, as I have told you, to know who he was. Now, as we are accustomed to depend upon one another and to call for one another's assistance, — as one appeals to the second hand to aid the first, — I mechanically looked around me to see if Porthos was there, for I saw you near the King, Aramis, and I knew that you, Athos, must be under the scaffold; and this makes me pardon you," he added, holding out his hand to Athos, "for you must have suffered. As I have said, I looked around me, when I saw to my right a head which had been cut open, and which, whether well or otherwise, had been mended with black taffeta. Parbleu!' said I to myself, 'there is some of my handiwork; I had a hand in patching up that poll.' In fact, it was that unfortunate Scotsman, Parry's brother, the man whom you remember M. Groslow amused himself by trying his strength on, and who had only half a head when we found him."

"Ah!" said Porthos, "the man with the black chickens."

"Exactly so; the same. He was making signs to another man, who was on my left. I turned, and discovered honest Grimaud, wholly engaged, like myself, in devouring with his eyes the masked executioner. 'Oh!' said I to him. And as his syllable is the abbreviation which the Count makes use of when he speaks to him, Grimaud understood that he was the person addressed, and turned as if moved by a spring. He also recognised me, and pointing his finger at the masked man: 'Hein!' said he, which meant, 'Do you see?' '*Parbleu!*' I answered; we perfectly understood each other. Then I turned to Parry's brother, and he also had eloquent looks. To be brief, all was finished, as you know, in a very melancholy way. The people departed; the evening was gradually setting in; I retired into a corner of the square, with Grimaud and the Scotsman, whom I had requested by a sign to remain

with us. From there I watched the executioner, who, having gone back to the King's room, was changing his dress—doubtless it was covered with blood; after which he put on a black hat, wrapped himself up in a cloak, and disappeared. I guessed that he was coming out, and ran round to the front door; five minutes later we saw him coming downstairs."

"And you followed him!" exclaimed Athos.

"Parbleu!" said D'Artagnan; "but not without difficulty, let me tell you, for every moment he kept turning round; then we were obliged to hide ourselves, or to assume an air of indifference. I could easily have gone up to him and killed him; but I am not an egotist, and I was preparing an entertainment for you, Aramis and Athos, to give you some slight consolation. At last, after half an hour's walk through the crookedest streets of the city, he reached a small solitary house, where no sound and no light indicated the presence of man. Grimaud drew a pistol from his breeches. 'Hein,' said he, showing it to me. 'No,' said I, and I grabbed him by the arm. I have told you that I had my idea. The man with the mask stopped before a low door and drew out a key, but before putting it into the lock he turned to see if he was followed. I was out of sight behind a tree, Grimaud behind a stone post, and the Scotsman, who had nothing to conceal him, threw himself flat on his face in the street. He whom we pursued doubtless thought himself alone; for I heard the grating of the key, the door opened, and he disappeared."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Aramis. "And while you are come here he will have fled, and we shall not find him again."

"Come now, Aramis," said D'Artagnan, "you must take me for some one else."

"Nevertheless," said Athos, "in your absence"—

"Well, in my absence, had I not Grimaud and the Scotsman to take my place? Before he could have had time to proceed ten steps in the house I had gone completely round it, and at the door by which he entered I placed our Scotsman, signifying to him that if the man with the black mask should come out, he was to follow him wherever he went, while Grimaud himself should also follow, and return to wait for us here. Then I stationed Grimaud at the other door, giving him the same orders. And now, here I am! The brute *is surrounded*; now who wishes to be present at the halloo?"

Athos threw himself into the arms of D'Artagnan, who was wiping his brow.

"My friend," he exclaimed, "you are really too good to pardon me. I am wrong — a hundred times wrong! I ought to know you by this time; but there is something so fundamentally bad in us that we are always suspicious."

"Hum!" said Porthos; "can this executioner chance to be M. Cromwell, who, to be sure that his business was well done, wished to do it himself?"

"Very likely, truly! Cromwell is short and stout, and this man is thin, lank, and rather tall than short."

"Some condemned soldier, to whom pardon was offered at this price," said Athos, "as they did to the unfortunate Chalais."

"No, no," continued D'Artagnan; "it was neither the measured pace of a foot-soldier nor the straddle of a dragoon; he had an elegant leg and a distinguished gait. Either I deceive myself greatly, or we are engaged with a gentleman."

"A gentleman!" exclaimed Athos; "impossible! It would be a disgrace to the whole class."

"A splendid chase!" said Porthos, with a laugh which made the window-panes rattle; "a splendid chase, mordieu!"

"Are you going to leave England, Athos?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No, I remain!" replied that gentleman, with a threatening gesture that boded no good to him for whom that gesture was meant.

"Our swords, then!" said Aramis — "our swords! and let us not lose one instant."

The four friends promptly resumed their dresses as gentlemen, girded on their swords, called up Mousqueton and Blaisois and ordered them to settle their account with the landlord, and to hold everything ready for their departure, it being probable that they would leave London that very night.

The night was become even more gloomy, the snow was still falling heavily, and seemed like a vast winding-sheet spread over the regicide city. It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and scarcely any one was to be seen in the streets; every one was at home in his own family, talking over in low voices the terrible occurrences of the day.

The four friends, wrapped in their cloaks, traversed all those places in the City so thronged during the day, so

deserted that night. D'Artagnan led them, endeavouring, from time to time, to find the marks he had made on the walls with his poignard; but the night was so dark that there was great difficulty in finding them. Yet D'Artagnan had fixed each post, each water-spout, and each sign so well in his memory that after a half hour's walk he came, with his three companions, in sight of the solitary house.

D'Artagnan believed, for an instant, that Parry's brother had disappeared; but he was mistaken: the hardy Scotsman, accustomed to the snows of his own mountains, was stretched out near a stone post, and, like a statue thrown from its base, insensible to the inclemency of the weather, had allowed himself to be covered with snow; but at the approach of the four friends he rose up.

"Come," said Athos, "here is another good servant. Vrai Dieu! worthy men are less rare than we thought! This is encouraging."

"Do not let us be too hasty about weaving crowns for our Scotsman," said D'Artagnan; "I fancy the rogue is here on his own private account. I have heard that the gentry born beyond the Tweed are very revengeful. Let Master Groslow take care! He might, perchance, pass but a sorry quarter of an hour, should we encounter him."

And, leaving his friends, he went up to the Scotsman and made himself known to him. He then beckoned the others to approach.

"Well?" said Athos, in English.

"No one has left the house," said Parry's brother.

"Very well. Porthos and Aramis, you remain with this man. D'Artagnan will take me to Grimaud."

Grimaud, not less clever than the Scotsman, was leaning against a hollow willow-tree which served him as a shelter. For an instant, as in the case of the other sentinel, D'Artagnan thought that the masked man was gone, and that Grimaud had followed him.

Suddenly a head appeared and a low whistle was heard.

"Oh!" said Athos.

"Yes," said Grimaud.

They went up to the willow.

"Well," inquired D'Artagnan, "has any one left the house?"

"No, but some one has gone in," answered Grimaud.

"A man or a woman?"

"A man."

"Aha!" said D'Artagnan, "so there are two of them?"

"I wish there were four," said Athos; "the party would be more equal."

"Perhaps they are four," said D'Artagnan.

"How so?"

"Might not other men have been in the house waiting for them?"

"That could be ascertained," said Grimaud, pointing to the window shutters, through which filtered rays of light.

"That is true," said Athos. "Let us call the others."

They went round the house and beckoned Porthos and Aramis, who hastily joined them.

"Have you seen anything?" they inquired.

"No, but we soon shall," replied D'Artagnan, pointing to Grimaud, who, by clinging to the projections of the wall, had already got five or six feet from the ground.

All four went up to the house.

Grimaud continued his ascent with the agility of a cat, until, at last, he managed to get hold of one of those hooks that serve to confine the shutters when they are open; at the same time he found a moulding that seemed to be a sufficient support for his foot, for he made a sign indicating that he had attained his object. Then he put his eye to a chink in the shutter.

"Well?" said D'Artagnan.

Grimaud held out his hand closed, all but two fingers.

"Speak," said Athos; "we cannot see your signs. How many are there?"

Grimaud made a great effort.

"Two," said he; "one faces me, the other's back is turned."

"Very well; and who is the one facing you?"

"The man I saw enter."

"Do you know him?"

"I thought I did, and was not mistaken; short and stout."

"Who can it be?" said the four friends, in a low voice.

"General Oliver Cromwell!"

The four friends looked at each other.

"And the other?" demanded Athos.

"Thin and lank."

"It is the executioner," said D'Artagnan and Aramis, in the same breath.

"I can only see his back," said Grimaud. "But wait: now he is moving and turning round; if he has taken off his mask I shall be able to see — Ah!"

Grimaud, as if he had been struck to the heart, let go the iron hook and threw himself back, emitting a hollow groan. Porthos caught him in his arms.

"Did you see him?" asked the four friends.

"Yes," replied Grimaud, with bristling hair, his forehead wet with perspiration.

"The lean, lank man?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"In fact, the executioner?" said Aramis.

"Yes."

"And who is he?" inquired Porthos.

"He! he!" stammered out Grimaud, pale as death, and seizing with his trembling hands the hand of his master.

"Who is he?" said Athos.

"Mordaunt!" replied Grimaud.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis uttered an exclamation of joy.

Athos started back and put his hand to his brow.

"Fate!" he murmured.

CHAPTER LXXII.

CROMWELL'S HOUSE.

It was really Mordaunt whom D'Artagnan had followed, without knowing him.

On entering the house he took off his mask and grizzly beard, which he had put on as a disguise, went up the stairs, opened a door, and in a room lighted by a lamp and adorned with gloomy-coloured hangings, found himself in the presence of a man who was seated at a desk writing.

This man was Cromwell.

Cromwell, as is known, had, in London, two or three of those retreats, unknown to the generality of his acquaintance, and the secret of which was disclosed only to his most intimate friends; as we have seen, Mordaunt could be reckoned as one of these.

When he entered Cromwell raised his head.

"Well, Mordaunt," said he, "you come late."

"General," replied Mordaunt, "I wished to see the ceremony to the end, and that delayed me."

"Ah!" said Cromwell, "I did not think that you were usually so curious."

"I am always curious to see the fall of one of your Highness's enemies, and that man was not considered one of the least. But you, General, — were you not at Whitehall?"

"No," replied Cromwell.

There was a moment's silence.

"Have you heard any of the particulars?" asked Mordaunt.

"None whatever. I have been here since morning. I only know that there was a plot to save the King."

"Ah! did you know that?" exclaimed Mordaunt.

"It is of little consequence. Four men, disguised as workmen, were to rescue the King from prison and take him to Greenwich, where a bark was waiting for him."

"And knowing this, did your Highness remain here, far from the City, tranquil and inactive?"

"Tranquil? Yes," said Cromwell. "But who told you that I was inactive?"

"And yet, if this plot had succeeded?"

"I wish it had."

"I thought that your Highness regarded the death of Charles as a misfortune necessary for the welfare of England?"

"Well," said Cromwell, "and that is still my opinion. But his death was all that was wanted; and perhaps it would have been better had it not been on the scaffold."

"Why so, your Highness?"

Cromwell smiled.

"Pardon me," said Mordaunt, "but you know, General, that I am an apprentice in politics, and I wish, in all circumstances, to profit by the lessons that my master is willing to give me."

"Because it would have been said that, though I caused him to be justly condemned, I had allowed him to escape out of pity."

"But if he had really escaped?"

"Impossible!"

"Impossible?"

"Yes, my precautions were taken."

"And did your Highness know the four men who undertook to save the King?"

"They were those four Frenchmen, two of whom were sent by Madame Henrietta to her husband, and two by Cardinal Mazarin to me."

"And do you think, sir, that Mazarin charged them to do what they have done?"

"It is possible; but he will disavow them."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Why?"

"Because they have failed."

"Your Highness, you gave me two of those Frenchmen because they were guilty of bearing arms in favour of Charles I. Now that they are guilty of a plot against England itself, will your Highness give me all four of them?"

"Take them," said Cromwell.

Mordaunt bowed, with a smile of triumphant ferocity.

"But," said Cromwell, seeing that Mordaunt was going to thank him, "let us return, if you please, to this unfortunate Charles. Were there any cries among the people?"

"Very few, except 'Long live Cromwell!'"

"Where were you situated?"

Mordaunt looked for an instant at the General, to read in his eyes whether his inquiry was only curiosity, and whether he did not already know everything.

But Mordaunt's fiery eyes could not penetrate the gloomy depths of Cromwell's.

"I was placed so that I could see everything and hear everything," said Mordaunt.

It was now Cromwell's turn to look earnestly at Mordaunt, and Mordaunt's to make himself impenetrable. After a few moments' examination, he turned his eyes away with indifference.

"It seems," said Cromwell, "that this improvised executioner did his duty well. The blow was delivered in a most masterly way — at least, as far as I have been informed."

Mordaunt recollected that Cromwell had told him that he had received no particulars whatever; and he was now convinced that the General had been present at the execution, concealed behind some curtain or shutter.

"In fact," said Mordaunt, in a calm voice and with an *unmoved countenance*, "a single blow sufficed."

"Perhaps," said Cromwell, "it was, after all, a man of that profession."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Why not?"

"The man had not the air of an executioner."

"And what other person, except an executioner," exclaimed Cromwell, "would have been willing to undertake such a frightful office?"

"But," said Mordaunt, "perchance some personal enemy of King Charles, who may have made a vow of revenge, and who has now accomplished that vow, — perhaps some gentleman, who had powerful reasons for hating the fallen King, and who, knowing that he was about to fly and escape him, thus thrust himself in the way, with his face masked and his axe in his hand, not as a substitute for the executioner, but as the Minister of fate."

"It is possible," said Cromwell.

"And if it were the case," said Mordaunt, "would your Highness condemn the deed?"

"It is not for me to judge," said Cromwell. "It rests between him and his God."

"But if your Highness knew this gentleman?"

"I do not know him, sir," said Cromwell, "and I do not wish to know him. What does it signify to me who it was? The moment Charles was condemned, it was not a man that cut off his head — it was an axe."

"And yet, without the man," said Mordaunt, "the King would have escaped."

Cromwell smiled.

"Without doubt. You yourself said that he would have been carried off."

"He would have been taken to Greenwich; there he would have got on board a felucca, with his four preservers. But in this felucca there were four of my men, with four barrels of gunpowder belonging to the nation. At sea the four men would have got into the boat; and you are already too skilful a politician, Mordaunt, to require any further explanation."

"Yes; at sea they would all have been blown up."

"Exactly so. The explosion would have done that which the axe could not do: King Charles would have disappeared, completely annihilated. It would then have been said that, having escaped human justice, he had been punished and over-

taken by the vengeance of Heaven — that we were nothing more than his judges, and that it was God who was his executioner. This is what your masked gentleman has made me lose, Mordaunt; you see, therefore, that I was right when I did not wish to know him; for really, in spite of his excellent intentions, I could not be grateful for what he has done."

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "as always, I bow myself humbly before you. You are a profound thinker; and," continued he, "your idea of the mined felucca is sublime."

"Absurd," said Cromwell, "since it is become useless. No idea is sublime in politics except that which bears fruit; every abortive idea is foolish and barren. You will, therefore, go to Greenwich this evening, Mordaunt," said Cromwell, rising; "you will inquire for the master of the felucca 'Thunderbolt,' you will show him a white handkerchief knotted at the four corners, — it is the signal agreed upon, — you will tell his men to disembark, and you will have the powder returned to the arsenal; unless, indeed" —

"Unless, indeed?" — responded Mordaunt, whose countenance had been illumined by a ferocious joy while Cromwell was speaking.

"Unless this felucca, such as she is, could aid your personal projects."

"Ah, my Lord, my Lord!" exclaimed Mordaunt, "God, in making you His elect, has given you His penetration, which nothing can escape."

"I believe that you called me my 'Lord,'" said Cromwell, laughing. "It matters not, as we are alone; but you must take care that such an expression does not escape you before our silly Puritans."

"But will your Highness not be called so shortly?"

"I hope so, at least," replied Cromwell; "but the time is not yet come."

Cromwell arose and took his cloak.

"Are you going, sir?" asked Mordaunt.

"Yes," answered Cromwell. "I slept here last night and the night before; and you know it is not my custom to sleep three nights in the same bed."

"Then, sir," said Mordaunt, "you give me leave of absence for the night?"

"And also for to-morrow, if you require it," said Cromwell. "*Since* yesterday evening," he added, smiling, "you have

nough for my service; and as you have some personal
to settle, it is just that I should leave you your own

ank you, sir; I hope it will be well employed."
nwell made Mordaunt a slight bow; then turning:
e you armed?" demanded he.
ave my sword," said Mordaunt.
d is there no one waiting for you at the door?"
one."
en you ought to come with me, Mordaunt."
ank you, sir; the turnings that you are obliged to make
ing through the subterranean passage would occupy my
and after what you have just told me, I have perhaps
lost too much. I will go out at the other door."
, then," said Cromwell; and putting his hand upon a
knob, he opened a door so completely hidden in the
y that it was impossible for the most practised eye to
out.
door moved by a steel spring, and closed itself behind

as one of those secret outlets which, as history informs
sted in all the mysterious houses inhabited by Crom-

assed under the deserted street, and opened into the
of a grotto, in the garden of another house, situated a
d paces from that which the Protector had just left.
as during the latter part of this scene that Grimaud
pied these two men through an opening in the shutter,
d successively recognised Cromwell and Mordaunt.
have seen what effect this intelligence produced on the
iends.
tagnan was the first who entirely recovered his facul-

rdaunt!" said he. "Ah, by Heaven! God himself offers
us."
s," said Porthos; "let us break open the door and fall
."
the contrary," said D'Artagnan, "let us break nothing
se; noise will collect a crowd; and if he is, as Grimaud
ith his worthy master, there must be a party of his
es at hand, some fifty paces off. Halò, Grimaud! come
nd try to keep yourself on your legs."

Grimaud came up. As he recovered his senses h become furious, but he was collected.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, "mount to the window agai tell us if Mordaunt is still with his companion, and wl he is coming out or going to bed. Should his companio be there, we will wait until he is alone; should he com we will catch him at his exit; should he remain, then w break open the window. It makes less noise, and is less cult, than breaking open a door."

Grimaud began silently to climb to the window.

"Guard the other issue, Athos and Aramis; we will r here with Porthos."

The two friends obeyed.

"Well, Grimaud?" demanded D'Artagnan.

"He is alone," said Grimaud.

"Are you sure of it?"

"Yes."

"We have not seen his companion come out."

"Perhaps he went out by the other door!"

"What is he doing?"

"He is wrapping himself up in his cloak and puttir his gloves."

"Come here!" said D'Artagnan in a low voice.

Porthos put his hand to his poignard, which he mechani drew from its scabbard.

"Sheathe it, friend Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "we not think of striking yet. We have got him; therefor us proceed in an orderly manner. We have some m explanations to exchange, and this is a sequel to the mentières scene; only let us hope that this may hav offspring, and that, if we crush him, everything will be hilated with him."

"Hush!" said Grimaud: "he is now preparing to com — he is now going up to the lamp — he is blowing it ou can see nothing more."

"Down with you then — down with you!"

Grimaud leaped back and alighted on his feet; the deadened the fall; no sound was heard.

"Tell Athos and Aramis to place themselves on each sic their door, as Porthos and I are going to do here — that must clap their hands if they get hold of him, and we wil *the same* if we catch him."

d disappeared.
os, Porthos," said D'Artagnan, "make less show of
d shoulders, my dear friend; he must not see any-
ıe comes out."
ly he comes this way!"
!" said D'Artagnan.
; pressed up close against the wall, as if he were try-
ieeze into it. D'Artagnan did the same.
ınt's steps were now heard on the echoing stairs.
ı door slid back with a grating noise in its groove.
looked out; but, by reason of the precautions taken
o friends, he saw nothing. He then introduced the
he lock; the door opened and he stood on the thres-

same moment he found himself face to face with
an.
d to shut the door again, but Porthos leaped forward,
knob, and opened it to its full extent. Then he
ıis hands three times, and Athos and Aramis came
ıp.
ınt turned deadly pale, but he neither uttered a cry
l for assistance.
gnan went to Mordaunt, and thrusting him back with
made him go backwards, as it were, to the stairs,
re lighted by a lamp that permitted the Gascon to
daunt's hands always in view. But Mordaunt was
at even if D'Artagnan were killed, he would still
d himself of his three other enemies. He therefore
one defensive movement — not one threatening gest-
ving reached the door, Mordaunt felt himself driven
; and doubtless he then thought that all would soon
with him. But he was mistaken: D'Artagnan put
and and opened the door; and he and Mordaunt
ımselves in the room where, ten minutes before, the
ın had been talking with Cromwell.
s came in after him. Stretching out his arm, he un-
ıe lamp from the ceiling; and by means of this first
ighted the second.
ınd Aramis appeared at the door and locked it.
the trouble to sit down," said D'Artagnan, offering
; man a chair.
k the chair from D'Artagnan's hands and sat down,

pale but calm. Aramis set three paces from him three oth chairs, for himself, D'Artagnan, and Porthos. Athos went a sat in a corner, in the most distant part of the room, seeming resolved to remain a motionless spectator of what was about take place.

Porthos sat on the left and Aramis on the right of D'Art gnan.

Athos appeared completely overwhelmed. Porthos ke rubbing the palms of his hands with a feverish impatienc

Aramis bit his lips even to bleeding, although he smiled.

D'Artagnan alone moderated his feelings, at least in appea ance.

"Monsieur Mordaunt," said he to the young man, "sinc chance has at last brought us together after so many days lo in running after each other, let us have a little talk together."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

CONVERSATION.

MORDAUNT had been taken so completely by surprise, and had mounted the stairs in such a state of confusion, that his powers of reflection were not under his control. It is certain that his first sensations produced that agitation, surprise, and undefinable terror which assail a man whose arm is suddenly seized by a deadly and more powerful enemy, at the very mo ment when he believes that enemy is in another place and dif ferently engaged.

But when once seated, from the moment he saw that reprieve was accorded him, from whatever motive it migh spring, he concentrated all his ideas and rallied all his facul ties.

D'Artagnan's fiery eyes, instead of intimidating, as it were electrified him; for this fiercely threatening look was yet frank and open in its hatred and anger. Mordaunt, ready to grasp at any opportunity that might offer to free himself fro this dangerous situation, whether by force or stratagem, co lected himself together like a bear, at bay in its lair, which fo lows, with an apparently motionless eye, every movement of *the hunter* who has tracked him.

Meantime that eye by a rapid sweep took in the long, powerful sword that hung by his side; and, without affectation, he laid his left hand upon its hilt, brought it within reach of his right hand, and seated himself, as D'Artagnan had requested him.

D'Artagnan, no doubt, expected some aggressive word that might lead to one of those mocking or terrible conversations that he sustained so well. Aramis said to himself, "We are now going to hear some foolish talk." Porthos bit his mustache, murmuring, "Mordieu! What ceremony in crushing this snake!" Athos buried himself in a corner of the room, motionless and pale as a marble bas-relief, and feeling in spite of his quietude the perspiration gather on his forehead.

Mordaunt said nothing; only when he was well assured that his sword was at his command, he crossed his legs imperturbably, and waited.

This silence could not be further prolonged without becoming ridiculous. D'Artagnan saw this, and as he had invited Mordaunt to sit down and talk, he thought that it was his business to begin the conversation.

"It seems to me, sir," said he, with a deadly politeness, "that you change your costume as rapidly as the Italian buffoons whom Cardinal Mazarin imported from Bergamo, and whom he no doubt took you to see during your visit to France."

Mordaunt made no answer.

"Just now," continued D'Artagnan, "you were disguised — I mean to say dressed — as an assassin; and now" —

"And now, on the contrary, I have all the appearance of being in the dress of a man who is going to be assassinated; is it not so?" replied Mordaunt, in his cool staccato voice.

"Oh! sir," replied D'Artagnan, "how can you say such things, when you are in the company of gentlemen, and have such a good sword by your side?"

"There is no sword so good as to be equal to four swords and four daggers; without reckoning the swords and poignards of your acolytes at the door."

"Pardon me, sir," replied D'Artagnan; "you are mistaken: those who are waiting for us at the door are not our acolytes, but our lacqueys. I am anxious to place things on their absolute basis of truth."

Mordaunt's only answer was a smile that ironically curled his lips.

"But that is not the question at issue," said D'Artagnan, "and I will return to my question. So then I was doing myself the honour of asking you, sir, why you have exchanged your exterior. The mask was sufficiently useful to you, it seems to me; the grizzly beard suited you admirably; and I think that the axe, with which you delivered such an illustrious blow, would be suitable at this moment. Why, then, did you lay them aside?"

"Because, in recalling to my mind the scene at Armentières, I thought that I should find four axes instead of one, since I was about to meet four executioners."

"Sir," replied D'Artagnan, with the greatest possible serenity, although a slight motion of the eyebrows announced that he was beginning to grow warm, — "sir, although profoundly vicious and corrupt, you are very young, and this is the reason that I do not take notice of your frivolous expressions. Yes, frivolous; for what you have just said regarding Armentières has not the slightest connection with the present situation. In fact, we could not offer a sword to madame your mother, and invite her to fence with us. But from you, sir, from a young gentleman who handles the poignard and pistol as we have seen you do, and who carries at his side a sword of that length, there is no one who has not the right to demand the favour of a meeting."

"Ah!" said Mordaunt, "then it is a duel that you want?"

And he rose up with sparkling eye, as if ready instantaneously to respond to the challenge.

Porthos rose also, ready as always for any such adventure.

"Pardon me, pardon me," said D'Artagnan, with the same coolness; "let us not hurry; for each of us ought to be anxious that things should go on according to rules. Sit down, then, my dear Porthos; and you, Monsieur Mordaunt, will you remain quiet? We will regulate this affair in the best way we can; and I am going to be candid with you. Confess, M. Mordaunt, that you greatly wish to kill us — the one or the others?"

"The one *and* the others!" replied Mordaunt.

D'Artagnan turned to Aramis and said to him:

"It is a great happiness, you must allow, dear Aramis, that M. Mordaunt understands so well the niceties of the French language. At least, there will be no misunderstanding *between us*, and we shall arrange everything wonderfully well."

ı turning to Mordaunt again:
ar Monsieur Mordaunt," he continued, "I will tell you
ese gentlemen repay with interest your kind sentiments
ing them, and would also be quite charmed to kill you.
say more, that they will probably kill you. However,
be like loyal gentlemen, and the best proof I can give
it is this."
with these words D'Artagnan threw his hat on the
pushed back his chair to the wall, made a sign to his
ı to do the same, and bowing to Mordaunt with a grace
French:
ım at your command, sir," he continued; "for if you
othing to say against the honour I claim, I will begin,
please. My sword is shorter than yours, it is true; but
mind, I hope the arm will supply the deficiency of the
"
ılt, there!" said Porthos, coming forward; "I begin, if
ease, and without rhetoric!"
low me, Porthos," said Aramis.
ɔs did not stir. He might have been taken for a statue.
eathing even appeared to be suspended.
ntlemen, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "be quiet; you
ıve your turn. Look at this man's eyes, and read there
essed hatred with which we have inspired him. See
kilfully he has unsheathed his sword, and admire the
spection with which he looks around him to see if there
obstacle to prevent him from free play. Well, does not
ı prove to you that M. Mordaunt is a skilful swordsman,
at you will succeed me ere long, provided I permit him?
n, therefore, in your places, like Athos, whose calmness
mmend to your imitation, and let me take the initiative
affair. Besides," said he, drawing his sword with a ter-
ɟesture, "I am more particularly concerned with this
man. I wish it, and I will have it so!"
ı was the first time that D'Artagnan had used this
sion in speaking to his friends. Hitherto he had con-
himself with thinking it.
ɨhos drew back; Aramis put his sword under his arm;
remained motionless in his dark corner, where he kept
f, not calm, as D'Artagnan said, but choking and
ing hard.
ɐturn your sword to its scabbard, Chevalier," said

D'Artagnan to Aramis; "else this gentleman might fancy that you have intentions that you do not entertain."

Then, turning to Mordaunt: "Sir," said he, "I await you."

"And I, gentlemen, admire you. You argue about who shall fight me, but you do not consult me on the point — me, whom the affair slightly concerns, I believe. I hate you all, it is true, but in different degrees. I hope to kill you all; but I have more chance of killing the first than the second, the second than the third, and the third than the fourth. I claim, therefore, the right of choosing my adversary. Should you deny me this right, kill me; I will not fight."

The four friends looked at one another.

"It is just," said Porthos and Aramis, who hoped that the choice would fall upon them.

Athos and D'Artagnan said nothing; out even their silence was consent.

"Well, then," said Mordaunt, in the midst of the profound and solemn silence that reigned in that mysterious house,— "well, then, I choose for my first adversary him who, not thinking himself longer worthy of being called the Comte de la Fère, has assumed the name of Athos."

Athos arose from his seat as if a spring had been placed under his feet; but to the astonishment of his friends, after a moment's immobility and silence:

"Monsieur Mordaunt," said he, shaking his head, "all contest between us is impossible; give to some other the honour you destined for me."

And he resumed his seat.

"Ah!" said Mordaunt, "there is already one who is afraid."

"A thousand thunders!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, springing at the young man; "who dares to say here that Athos is afraid?"

"Let him say what he likes," said Athos, with a smile full of sorrow and contempt.

"And is this your decision, Athos?" demanded the Gascon.

"Irrevocable," said Athos.

"Very well; then we will say no more about it."

Then, turning to Mordaunt: "You have heard, sir," said he, "that the Comte de la Fère does not wish to do you the honour of fighting you. Choose amongst us the one who is to take his place."

"*As I do* not fight him," replied Mordaunt, "it is of little

ience to me whom I fight. Put your names into a hat,
vill draw one out at hazard."
at is an idea!" said D'Artagnan.
fact, this method reconciles everything," replied Ara-

hould not have thought of it," said Porthos; "and yet
ry simple."
me, Aramis," said D'Artagnan, "write this for us in
etty little hand in which you wrote to Marie Michon,
rm her that this gentleman's mother wished to have the
f Buckingham assassinated."
launt bore this fresh attack without wincing. He was
g up with his arms crossed, and appeared as calm as a
uld be under such circumstances. If it was not courage
at least pride, which much resembles it.
nis went to Cromwell's desk, tore three pieces of paper
al size, wrote his own name on the first, and the names
companions on the two others, held them open towards
nt, who, without reading them, nodded to signify that
satisfied; then, having rolled them up, he put them into
nd presented them to the young man.
hrust his hand into the hat, drew out one of the papers,
he let fall contemptuously on the table without read-

, you snake!" murmured D'Artagnan, "I would give
chances of being captain of Musketeers, that this paper
ontain my name!"
nis opened the paper; but calm and cool as he affected
is voice perceptibly shook with hatred and desire:
Artagnan!" he read, in a loud voice.
tagnan uttered an exclamation of joy.
!" said he, "so there is justice in Heaven!"
, turning to Mordaunt: "I hope, sir," said he, "that
ve no objection to make?"
ne whatever, sir," replied Mordaunt, drawing his sword
and resting the point on his boot.
moment D'Artagnan was quite certain that his wish was
l and that his man would not escape him, he regained
calmness, all his serenity, and indeed all the delibera-
at he was accustomed to exhibit in his preparations for
us an affair as a duel. He turned up the cuffs of his
properly, and rubbed the sole of his right foot on the

floor; but this did not prevent his remarking, for the sec time, that Mordaunt cast a very singular glance around l such as he had once before detected.

"Are you ready, sir?" said he, at length.

"I am waiting for you, sir," replied Mordaunt, raising head and looking at D'Artagnan with an expression impossible to describe.

"Then be on your guard, sir," said the Gascon, "for I hav the sword pretty well."

"And I also," said Mordaunt.

"So much the better; it will soothe my conscience. guard!"

"One moment," said the young man; "give me your wo gentlemen, that you will only attack me successively."

"Is it merely to have the pleasure of insulting us, you lit viper! that you make this request?" asked Porthos.

"No; it is, as this gentleman said just now, to sooth conscience."

"It must be for something else," murmured D'Artagn shaking his head and looking around him with some anxie

"On the word of a gentleman," said Aramis and Porthos, the same time.

"In that case, gentlemen," said Mordaunt, "draw yourselv up in some corner, like the Comte de la Fère, — who, if he do not wish to fight, at any rate seems to me to understand th rules of combat, — and give us room, for we shall want it."

"So let it be," said Aramis.

"What a fuss!" said Porthos.

"Draw aside, gentlemen," said D'Artagnan; "we must no leave the smallest excuse to justify this gentleman in behavin ill; which, saving the respect I have for him, I must say h seems much inclined to do."

This new raillery fell blunted on Mordaunt's impenetrabl face.

Porthos and Aramis drew themselves up in a corner, on th same side as Athos, so that the champions occupied the middl of the room; that is to say, they were in the full light, the tw lamps that illumined the scene standing on Cromwell's desk.

"Come," said D'Artagnan, "are you ready at last, sir?"

"I am," said Mordaunt.

Both at the same time made one step forward, and by th *movement* their swords became engaged.

gnan was too distinguished a swordsman to amuse
n the language of the school) by feeling for his
. He made a brilliant and rapid feint, which was
y Mordaunt.
" said he, with a smile of satisfaction.
thout wasting time, thinking that he saw an opening,
a direct thrust, rapid and flamboyant. like lightning.
nt parried a counter en carte, so close that it would
held in a young lady's ring.
n to think that we shall have some fun," said D'Ar-

murmured Aramis; "but, in amusing yourself, fence

lieu! my friend," said Porthos, "take care!"
now Mordaunt's turn to smile.
sir," said D'Artagnan, "what a rascally smile you
; was the devil who taught you to smile in that man-
t not?"
nt made no other reply than endeavouring to hold
rtagnan's sword with a strength that the Gascon did
; to find in a frame apparently so weak. But, thanks
as skilful as that which his adversary had just exe-
met Mordaunt's sword in time, and it glided along
ithout entering his breast.
nt took a quick step back.
you break away," said D'Artagnan, "you turn! As
e. I shall gain something by it: I no longer see
lly face. Here I am entirely in the shade; so much
. You have no idea what a false look you have, sir,
ly when you are frightened. Just look into my eyes,
will there see what your glass never shows you — a
loyal look."
nt, at this flow of words, which was not perhaps in
taste, but which was customary with D'Artagnan,
ties it was to engage his adversary's attention, did
er a word; but he broke, and, still turning, at last
places with D'Artagnan. He smiled more and more.
e began to annoy the Gascon.
, come, it is necessary to put a finish to this," said
an. "The scoundrel has muscles of iron. Now for
sts!"
turn he pressed upon Mordaunt, who still continued

to give back, but evidently on a plan, without making a fault of which D'Artagnan could take advantage, without his sword swerving one instant from the proper line. And yet, as the contest was in a room, and there was a want of space for the combatants, Mordaunt's foot soon touched the wall, against which he rested his left hand.

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "this time you cannot give back, my fine friend! Gentlemen," said he, compressing his lips and frowning, "did you ever see a scorpion nailed to a wall? No! Well, then, you shall soon see it."

And in one second D'Artagnan made three terrible thrusts at Mordaunt: each of them touched, but only grazed him. D'Artagnan could not understand this force. The three friends looked on, breathing hard, with perspiration on their brows.

At last D'Artagnan, engaged too closely, in turn took one step back to prepare his fourth thrust, or rather to execute it; for fencing was with D'Artagnan like chess — a vast combination, the details of which were closely interwoven. But at the very moment when, with greater violence than ever, he threw himself upon his adversary — at the very instant when, after a close and rapid feint, he attacked quick as lightning, the wall appeared to split asunder, Mordaunt disappeared through the yawning aperture, and D'Artagnan's sword, caught between the two panels, snapped off as if it had been glass.

D'Artagnan recoiled and the wall closed again.

Mordaunt, while defending himself, had manœuvred so as to bring his back against the secret door by which we saw Cromwell leave the room. Having accomplished this, he had felt for the knob with his left hand; then he disappeared, as in the theatre vanish the evil genii who have the power of passing through walls.

The Gascon uttered a furious imprecation; to which, on the other side of the iron panel, a savage laugh responded — a funereal laugh that made a shudder run through even the veins of the sceptical Aramis.

"Come, gentlemen, come!" cried D'Artagnan; "let us break open this door."

"It is the devil himself!" said Aramis, hastening up at his friend's call.

"He has escaped us! — Sangdieu! he has escaped us!" shouted Porthos, applying his mighty shoulder to the door, which, secured by a secret spring, did not move.

"So much the better," murmured Athos hoarsely.

"I suspected this, mordioux!" said D'Artagnan, exhausting himself in fruitless efforts, — "I suspected it. When the wretch circled round the room I foresaw some infamous manœuvre; I suspected that he was laying some plan; but who could have imagined this?"

"It is a fearful misfortune that his friend the devil sends us," said Aramis.

"It is a manifest blessing sent by God!" said Athos, with evident delight.

"Really," said D'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders, and giving up the door, that decidedly would not open, "you are becoming imbecile, Athos! How can you say such things to such men as we are? Mordioux! do you not understand our situation?"

"What then? — what situation?" demanded Porthos.

"At this game, whoever does not kill is killed," replied D'Artagnan. "See now, my dear, does it enter into your expiatory jeremiads that M. Mordaunt is sacrificing us to his filial piety? If you think so, tell me candidly."

"Oh, D'Artagnan, my friend!"

"Really, it is quite pitiable to view things from this standpoint! The wretch will send us a hundred Ironsides, who will pound us in this mortar of Cromwell's like grain. Come, come! Away! If we remain five minutes longer here, it is all over with us."

"Yes, you are right; let us be off!" said Athos and Aramis.

"And where shall we go?" demanded Porthos.

"To the hôtel, my dear friend, to get our baggage and horses; and from thence, should it please God, to France, where, at any rate, I understand the architecture of the houses. Our vessel is waiting for us; and, in faith, it is fortunate that it is so."

And D'Artagnan, joining example to precept, thrust the stump of his sword into the scabbard, picked up his hat and opened the stairway door, and went swiftly down, followed by his three companions.

At the door the fugitives found their lacqueys, and inquired whether they knew anything about Mordaunt; but they had not seen any one leave the house.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE FELUCCA "THUNDERBOLT."

D'Artagnan had guessed aright. Mordaunt had no time to lose, and he lost none; he knew how quick to decide and act his enemies were, and determined to act accordingly. This time the Musketeers had found an adversary quite worthy of them.

After having carefully closed the door behind him, Mordaunt, sheathing his useless sword, glided through the subterranean passage; but as he approached the neighbouring house, he stopped to examine himself and to recover his breath.

"Good!" said he; "it is nothing — almost nothing — mere scratches; one on the breast and two on the arm. The wounds I give are rather better. Let them ask the executioner of Béthune, my uncle De Winter, and King Charles. Now, there is not one moment to lose, for if that be lost perhaps they will be saved; and they must die, all four together, by one single blow, destroyed by the thunder of man, for want of that of God. They must disappear — shattered, annihilated, dispersed in atoms. Let me run, then, till my limbs no longer can carry me, till my heart bursts in my bosom: but I must arrive before them!"

And Mordaunt started at a rapid, but more equal, pace toward the first cavalry barracks, about a quarter of a league off; this quarter of a league he accomplished in four or five minutes.

Having reached the barracks, he made himself known, took the best horse in the stables, leaped upon it, and started down the road. In a quarter of an hour he reached Greenwich.

"There is the port," he murmured; "that dark spot down there is the Isle of Dogs. Good! I am half an hour before them — perhaps an hour. Fool that I was! I almost burst myself by my silly haste. Now," said he, standing up in his stirrups, that he might see as far as possible amongst the numerous masts, — "'The Thunderbolt'? — where is 'The Thunderbolt'?"

As he mentally pronounced this word, and as if to respond to his thought, a man lying on a coil of ropes rose up and *came toward* him.

Mordaunt drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and allowed it to float a moment in the air. The man seemed to notice it, but remained stationary, without moving back or forward.

Mordaunt tied a knot at each of the corners of his handkerchief; the man came up to him. It will be remembered, this was the signal agreed upon. The sailor was enveloped in a large rough hooded-cloak that concealed his figure and face.

"Sir," said the mariner, "perhaps you are come from London to take a trip to sea?"

"Expressly for that purpose," replied Mordaunt, "and to sail from the Isle of Dogs."

"That is it! Doubtless you have some preference, sir? You would like one vessel better than another? You would wish for a good sailing vessel — one that was swift?" —

"Like a Thunderbolt," replied Mordaunt.

"Very well. Then mine is the very vessel you are looking for. I am its master."

"I begin to think so," said Mordaunt, "especially if you have not forgotten a certain signal."

"Here it is, sir," replied the sailor, drawing from the pocket of his boat-cloak a handkerchief knotted at the four corners.

"Good, good!" exclaimed Mordaunt, leaping from his horse. "Now, then, there is no time to lose. Send my horse to the nearest inn and take me to your vessel."

"But your companions?" said the sailor. "I thought there were four of you, without reckoning the lacqueys."

"Listen," said Mordaunt, going close to the sailor: "I am not the person you are waiting for, as you are not the person they hope to find. You have taken Captain Rogers's place, have you not? You are here by the order of General Cromwell; and I also came from him."

"In fact," said the master, "I know you. You are Captain Mordaunt."

Mordaunt started.

"Oh! do not be frightened," said the sailor, pushing aside his hood and showing his face; "I am a friend."

"Captain Groslow!" exclaimed Mordaunt.

"The same. The General remembered that I used to be a naval officer and gave me charge of this expedition. Is there anything changed?"

"Nothing; on the contrary, everything remains as it was before."

"Because, for a moment, I thought that the King's death might" —

"The King's death has only made them hasten their flight. In a quarter of an hour, nay, in ten minutes, they will probably be here."

"Then what are you come for?"

"To embark with you."

"Ah! does the General doubt my zeal?"

"No; but I wish myself to be present at my revenge. Can you find no one to relieve me of my horse?"

Groslow whistled, and a sailor made his appearance.

"Patrick," said Groslow, "lead this horse to the nearest inn. Should you be asked to whom it belongs, say to an Irish gentleman."

The sailor went off without saying a word.

"Now," said Mordaunt, "are you not afraid that they may recognise you?"

"There is no danger in this dress, covered by this cloak, and in this dark night. You yourself did not know me: they are, therefore, much less likely to do so."

"True," said Mordaunt. "Besides, they will never think of you. Everything is ready, is it not?"

"Yes."

"The cargo is on board?"

"Yes."

"Five barrels, full?"

"And fifty empty."

"That is right."

"We are carrying port wine to Anvers."

"Excellent. Now take me on board and return to your post, for they will soon be here."

"I am ready."

"It is of the utmost importance that none of your men should see me enter the vessel."

"I have only one man on board, and I am as sure of him as of myself. Besides, this man does not know you; and, like his companions, he is ready to obey our orders; but he is ignorant of everything."

"That is well. Come along."

They then went down to the Thames. A little boat was

moored to the bank by an iron chain attached to a stake. Groslow pulled the boat toward him, steadied it while Mordaunt got in, then jumped in himself, and seizing the oars he began to row in a style that proved the truth of what he had said; namely, that he had not forgotten his old business of a sailor.

In about five minutes they had got clear of that crowd of ships which even then encumbered the approach to London; and Mordaunt could perceive, like a dark spot, the little vessel riding at anchor about four or five cables' length from the Isle of Dogs.

On approaching "The Thunderbolt" Groslow whistled in a peculiar manner, and they saw a man's head appearing above the rail.

"Is it you, captain?" inquired the man.

"Yes; lower the ladder."

And Groslow, passing light and swift as a swallow under the bowsprit, ranged himself alongside of the vessel.

"Get aboard," said he to his companion.

Mordaunt, without answering, seized the rope and climbed up the side of the vessel with an activity and firmness not common to landsmen. But his desire of vengeance made up for his want of practice, and rendered him fit for anything.

As Groslow had foreseen, the sailor on board did not appear even to remark that his captain returned with a companion.

Mordaunt and Groslow went to the captain's cabin. It was a temporary one erected on the deck. The state cabin had been given up to his passengers by Captain Rogers.

"And they," demanded Mordaunt, "where will they be?"

"At the other end of the ship," replied Groslow.

"And have they nothing to do with this part?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Excellent! I will keep myself concealed in your cabin. Do you return to Greenwich and bring them back. You have a boat?"

"That in which we came here."

"It appeared to me to be light and well built."

"A regular canoe."

"Make her fast to the stern, put some oars into her, and let her follow in our wake, that we may have nothing to do but to cut the rope. Provide a supply of rum and biscuits, for

should the sea chance to be rough, your men will not be sorry to have something at hand to refresh them."

"It shall be done as you wish. Would you like to visit the powder magazine?"

"Not till you return. I wish to place the fuse myself, that I may be sure that it will not burn long. Above all, conceal your face, that they may not detect you."

"Do not disturb yourself about that."

"Go, now; it is striking ten at Greenwich."

In fact, the sound of a clock striking came solemnly through the air, which was charged with heavy clouds rolling along the sky like silent billows.

Groslow closed the door, which Mordaunt fastened inside: and after having charged the sailor to keep a good lookout, he went down into his boat, and the men swiftly pulled away, tossing up the foam with two pairs of oars.

When Groslow reached Greenwich, the wind was cold and the jetty was deserted; several vessels had just sailed with the full tide. At the very moment that Groslow set foot on land, he heard something like the gallop of horses on the road paved with cobble-stones.

"Oho!" said he; "Mordaunt was right in hurrying me. There was no time to lose. Here they are!"

It was our friends, or rather their vanguard, composed of D'Artagnan and Athos. Having come opposite the spot where Groslow was standing, they stopped, as if they guessed that he whom they expected was there. Athos dismounted and quietly unrolled a handkerchief knotted at the four corners, permitting it to float in the air; while D'Artagnan, always cautious, remained leaning down on his horse, with his hand buried in his holster.

Groslow, still in doubt whether the horsemen were really those he expected, had squatted down behind one of those cannons, set up on the shore, to which vessels are frequently moored; but when he saw the signal, he arose and went toward the gentlemen. He was so completely muffled up in his cloak that it was quite impossible to see his face. Besides, the night was so dark that even this precaution was superfluous.

Yet Athos's piercing eye discovered, in spite of the darkness, that it was not Rogers who was before him.

"What do you want with me?" said he to Groslow, stepping back.

"I wish to tell you, my Lord," replied Groslow, putting on an Irish accent, "that if you are looking for Captain Rogers, you will look for him in vain."

"How so?" said Athos.

"Because this morning he fell from the topmast and broke his leg. But I am his cousin; he told me the whole affair, and ordered me to look out for him, and to take his place in carrying wherever they wished the gentlemen who should bring me a handkerchief knotted at the four corners, like that which you hold in your hand and that which I have in my pocket."

And so saying, Groslow drew from his pocket the handkerchief that he had already shown Mordaunt.

"Is that all?" demanded Athos.

"No, my Lord, for there are also seventy-five pounds promised if I land you safe and sound at Boulogne, or on any other part of the coast of France that you may prefer."

"What do you say to this, D'Artagnan?" asked Athos, in French.

"First tell me what he says," replied D'Artagnan.

"Ah, that's true," said Athos; "I forgot that you do not understand English."

And he repeated to D'Artagnan the conversation he had just had with the captain.

"This appears to me to be probable enough," said the Gascon.

"And to me also," said Athos.

"Besides," said D'Artagnan, "should this man deceive us, we can at any time blow out his brains."

"Then who will pilot the vessel?"

"You, Athos; you know so many things that I have no doubt you can navigate a ship."

"Faith, my friend," said Athos, with a smile, "even while jesting you have nearly hit upon the truth. My father originally destined me for the sea, and I have some vague notions of navigation."

"There now, do you see!" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"Go and get our friends, then, D'Artagnan. It is eleven o'clock, and there is no time to lose."

D'Artagnan rode toward two horsemen, who, pistol in hand, were on the lookout in the road, near the first houses of the town; while at a short distance from them three more horsemen were on guard and seemed to be waiting also.

The two sentinels in the middle of the road were Porthos and Aramis, and the other three were Mousqueton, Blaisois, and Grimaud. The last, however, when looked at more closely, was double; for behind him on the crupper he carried Parry, who was to return to London with all the horses, which had been sold to the landlord to pay the expenses at his house. By means of this the four friends had brought away with them a sum which, if not considerable, was at least sufficient to provide against delays or emergencies.

D'Artagnan requested his friends to follow, and directed their lacqueys to dismount and unstrap their portmanteaus.

Parry left his friends with regret; they had wished him to accompany them to France, but this he had obstinately refused to do.

"It is obvious," said Mousqueton, "that he is thinking of Groslow."

It will be remembered that Groslow had cut open his head.

The little troop rejoined Athos. But D'Artagnan had already resumed his natural distrust; he thought the quay too much deserted, the night too dark, the captain too civil.

He had recounted to Aramis the incident we have just mentioned, and Aramis, not less doubtful than himself, had considerably added to his suspicions.

A slight clicking of the tongue against his teeth revealed the Gascon's anxiety to Athos.

"We have no time to be distrustful," said Athos; "the boat awaits us; let us embark."

"Besides," said Aramis, "what is there to prevent our embarking and being vigilant at the same time? We can watch the captain."

"And if he does not go right I will knock him down, that's all!"

"Well said, Porthos," replied D'Artagnan. "Get in, then. Lead the way, Mousqueton."

And D'Artagnan stopped his friends, making the lacqueys precede them, that they might test the plank that led from the jetty to the boat.

The three valets passed along it without accident.

Athos followed them, then Porthos, then Aramis; D'Artagnan brought up the rear, all the time shaking his head.

"What the devil is the matter with you, my friend?" said Porthos. "'Pon my soul, you would make even a Cæsar afraid."

"The matter is," replied D'Artagnan, "that I see at this port neither inspector, sentinel, nor custom-house officer."

"And do you complain of that, D'Artagnan?" said Porthos; "all goes as pleasant as flowers strewn on a bank."

"All goes on too well, Porthos. But never mind — we must trust in God!"

The moment the plank was withdrawn the captain seated himself at the rudder, and made a sign to one of the sailors, who, with a boat-hook, began to pilot them through the labyrinth of vessels by which they were surrounded.

The other sailor was already on the larboard side, with his oar in his hand. As soon as they could use their oars, his companion having joined him, the boat glided swiftly through the water.

"At last we are off," said Porthos.

"Alas!" ejaculated the Comte de la Fère, "we depart alone!"

"Yes, but we are all four together, and without a scratch; that is some consolation."

"We are not yet on board," said D'Artagnan; "beware of meetings!"

"Ah, my dear," said Porthos, "you are like the crows — you always sing of misfortune. Who could meet us on such a dark night as this, when one cannot see twenty yards away?"

"Yes, but to-morrow morning!" said D'Artagnan.

"To-morrow morning we shall be at Boulogne."

"I hope so, with all my heart," replied the Gascon, "and I confess my weakness. Listen, Athos: you will laugh, but as long as we were within gunshot of the jetty, or the vessels alongside of it, I expected some frightful volley that would annihilate us all."

"But," said Porthos, with his rough good sense, "the thing is impossible, for the captain and his sailors would have been killed at the same time."

"Bah! That would have been a mighty affair for Mordaunt! Do you suppose that he calculates to such a nicety as that?"

"At any rate," said Porthos, "I am very glad that D'Artagnan confesses that he is afraid."

"Not only do I confess it, but I boast of it. I am not such a rhinoceros as you are. Oho! what is that?"

"'The Thunderbolt,'" said the captain.

"Are we there, then?" said Athos, in English.

"Almost," replied the captain.

A few more strokes of the oars brought them alongside of the little vessel. The sailor had seen the boat, and was in waiting with the ladder. Athos mounted first, with the perfect skill of a sailor; Aramis, with the habit he had long acquired of mounting rope ladders, and of passing into forbidden places by means more or less ingenious; D'Artagnan, like a chamois hunter; and Porthos, by that development of physical strength which made up with him for other defects.

With the lacqueys the operation was more difficult; not for Grimaud, however, who, a kind of cat in a gutter, lean and lank, always found means to hoist himself up anywhere; but for Mousqueton and Blaisois, whom the sailors were obliged to lift in their arms within reach of Porthos, who, seizing them by their shirt collar, placed them standing upright on the deck of the vessel.

The captain led his passengers to their cabin; it was one room, and they were to use it in common. He then prepared to leave them, under the pretence of having some orders to give.

"One minute," said D'Artagnan. "How many men have you on board, master?"

"I do not understand," he replied, in English.

"Ask him in his own language, Athos."

Athos put the question, as D'Artagnan had desired.

"Three men," replied Groslow, "not counting myself, of course."

D'Artagnan understood this; for, while answering, the captain had raised three fingers.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "three; I begin to regain my confidence. Never mind; while you settle yourselves I will take a survey of the vessel."

"And I," said Porthos, "will go and see what there is for supper."

"That is a noble and generous project, Porthos; put it into execution. You, Athos, lend me Grimaud, who, by keeping company with his friend Parry, has learnt to jabber some sort of English; he will serve as my interpreter."

"Go, Grimaud," said Athos.

There was a lantern on deck. D'Artagnan lifted it with one hand, took a pistol in the other, and said to the captain: "Come!"

; and *Goddam* was all that he could remember of Eng-

rtagnan reached the hatchway, and went down to the
deck; it was divided into three compartments: that
hich D'Artagnan had descended, which might extend
he third mast to the extremity of the poop, and was,
uently, covered by the planks of the cabin in which
Aramis, and Porthos were making their preparations
night; the second, which occupied the centre of the
and which was intended for the occupation of the lac-
the third, which extended under the prow; that is to
der the temporary cabin of the captain, where Mordaunt
ncealed.
o!" said D'Artagnan, descending the hatchway and
g the lantern out before him; "what a number of
! One might fancy one's self in the cavern of Ali

e Thousand and One Nights" had just been translated
first time, and was very popular at that period.
hat did you say?" asked the captain, in English.
rtagnan understood him by the intonation of his voice.
wish to know what there is in these barrels," asked
gnan, setting the lantern on one of the casks.
captain made a motion as if he would remount the
but constrained himself.
orto," he replied.
! port wine?" said D'Artagnan. "That is a comfort;
ll not die of thirst."
, turning to Groslow, who was wiping big drops of per-
on from his brow:
e they full?" he asked.
aud translated the question.
me are full and some empty," replied Groslow, in a voice
in spite of all his efforts, betrayed his trepidation.
rtagnan struck against the barrels with his knuckles, and
five full and the rest empty. He then introduced his
into the spaces between the barrels, to the great terror
Englishman, and discovered that these spaces were
pied.
me, let us go on," he said. And he went to the door
d to the second compartment.
ait," said the Englishman, who had remained behind,

still labouring under the agitation that we have described,— "wait; I have the key of that door."

And passing quickly before D'Artagnan and Grimaud, he introduced the key into the lock with a trembling hand, and they found themselves in the second compartment, where Mousqueton and Blaisois were preparing supper. There was evidently nothing here to examine or find fault with; all the nooks and corners were distinctly perceptible, being illumined by the lamp that lighted these worthy companions.

They passed on quickly and visited the third compartment. This was the sailors' cabin.

Three or four hammocks hung from the ceiling, a table fastened by a double rope fixed to its two ends, and two worm-eaten and rickety benches composed all the furniture. D'Artagnan raised two or three bits of old sails hung against the walls, and seeing nothing suspicious he regained the deck by the hatchway.

"And this cabin?" he demanded.

Grimaud translated the Musketeer's words into English.

"This cabin is mine," replied the captain; "would you like to go into it?"

"Open the door," said D'Artagnan.

The Englishman obeyed. D'Artagnan thrust out his arm with the lantern, poked his head into the half-opened door, and seeing that this cabin was a regular hole:

"Good!" said he; "if there is an army on board, it is not concealed here. Let us see whether Porthos has found anything for supper."

And thanking the captain with a nod, he rejoined his friends in the state cabin.

Porthos had found nothing; or, at all events, if he had been successful fatigue had conquered hunger; for, wrapped in his cloak, he was sleeping soundly when D'Artagnan returned.

Athos and Aramis, rocked by the gentle motion of the first waves of the sea, were also just beginning to close their eyes, but they opened them at the noise made by the entrance of their companion.

"Well?" inquired Aramis.

"All is right," answered D'Artagnan, "and we may sleep in tranquillity."

On this assurance Aramis let his head fall again, Athos made an affectionate sign, and D'Artagnan, who, like Porthos,

had more need of sleep than of food, dismissed Grimaud, and lay down in his cloak, with his sword drawn, and in such a posture that he barred the passage, so that it was impossible to enter the cabin without in some way disturbing him.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE PORT WINE.

In about ten minutes the gentlemen were asleep; but not so the hungry and yet more thirsty valets.

Blaisois and Mousqueton set about preparing their bed, which consisted of a plank and a valise; while on a table, suspended like that in the adjoining cabin, swung to and fro, with the motion of the sea, a loaf of bread, a pot of beer, and three glasses.

"Cursed motion!" said Blaisois. "I see that it is going to treat me just as it did when I came over."

"And then to have nothing to fight the seasickness with!" responded Mousqueton, "but barley bread and *hop* wine! Pouah!"

"But your wicker bottle, Monsieur Mouston," suggested Blaisois, who had just finished his preparations for the night, and now came staggering up to the table, at which Mousqueton had already taken his place, and where he at length managed to sit down, — "but your wicker bottle; have you lost it?"

"No," replied Mousqueton, "but Parry kept it. Those devilish Scotsmen are always thirsty. And you, Grimaud," asked Mousqueton of his companion, who just then came in, after having accompanied D'Artagnan in his survey, "are you thirsty?"

"As a Scotsman," laconically replied Grimaud.

And he sat down near Blaisois and Mousqueton, drew an account book from his pocket, and began to settle the accounts of the fraternity, of which he was the steward.

"Oh! la! la!" exclaimed Blaisois, "how bad my stomach begins to feel!"

"If that is the case," said Mousqueton, in a doctoral tone, "take a little nourishment."

"You call that nourishment?" said Blaisois, accompanying a most piteous look with a disdainful motion of his finger, as he pointed to the barley bread and the jug of beer.

"Blaisois," replied Mousqueton, "do you not remember that bread is the genuine nourishment of the Frenchman, yet the Frenchman not always has it? Ask Grimaud."

"Yes — but the beer," replied Blaisois, with a promptitude that did honour to the quickness of his spirit of repartee,— "but the beer; is it his true drink?"

"As for that," said Mousqueton, caught in a dilemma and somewhat puzzled how to answer the question, "I must confess that it is not, and that they have as great an antipathy to beer as the English have to wine."

"What! Monsieur Mouston," said Blaisois, who this time doubted Mousqueton's profound knowledge, although, in the ordinary affairs of life, he greatly admired it, — "what! Monsieur Mouston, do not the English like wine?"

"They detest it."

"But yet I have seen them drink it."

"As a penance; and the proof is," continued Mousqueton, bridling up, "that an English prince died one day because they put him into a tub of Malmsey. I have heard the Abbé d'Herblay tell the story."

"The imbecile!" cried Blaisois. "I wish I were in his place."

"You can be," said Grimaud, all the time casting up his figures.

"How so?" demanded Blaisois; "I can be?"

"Yes," replied Grimaud, carrying four and adding it to the next column.

"I can be? Explain yourself, M. Grimaud."

Mousqueton kept silence during Blaisois's questions; but it was easy to see, by the expression of his countenance, that it was not through indifference.

Grimaud continued his calculation and summed up his total.

"Porto!" he then said, stretching out his hand in the direction of the first compartment visited by D'Artagnan and himself in company with the captain.

"What! Those barrels which I saw through the half-opened door?"

"Porto!" repeated Grimaud, who had commenced a fresh arithmetical calculation.

"I have heard it said," replied Blaisois, addressing himself to Mousqueton, "that Porto is an excellent Spanish wine."

"Excellent," said Mousqueton, lapping his lips. "There is some in the Baron de Bracieux's cellar."

"Suppose we were to ask those Englishmen to sell us a bottle?" demanded the simple-hearted Blaisois.

"Sell!" exclaimed Mousqueton, recalled to his ancient marauding tendencies. "It is plain enough, young man, that you have yet but little experience in the affairs of life. Why should you buy when you can take?"

"Take!" said Blaisois; "covet your neighbour's goods! It seems to me that the thing is forbidden."

"Where?" demanded Mousqueton.

"In the commandments of God, or of the Church, I do not remember which, but what I do know is that it is said, 'Thou shalt not covet the goods of another — nor his spouse.'"

"Now, that is a childish reason, M. Blaisois," said Mouqueton, in his most patronising tone. "Yes, I repeat it — childish. Where have you ever seen in the Scriptures, I should like to ask, that the English are our neighbours?"

"Nowhere, that is true," replied Blaisois; "at least I cannot remember it."

"A childish reason, I again repeat," continued Mousqueton. "If you had been at war ten years, like Grimaud and me, my dear Blaisois, you would know how to make a distinction between the goods of your neighbour and those of an enemy. Now, an Englishman is an enemy, I think; and this Port wine belongs to the English, therefore it belongs to us, since we are Frenchmen. Do you not know the proverb, 'So much taken from an enemy'?" —

This eloquence, supported by all the authority that Mousqueton drew from his long experience, astounded Blaisois. He hung his head as if to collect his faculties, and then, suddenly raising his brow like a man armed with an irresistible argument:

"But our masters," said he, "will they be of your opinion, Monsieur Mouston?"

Mousqueton smiled with disdain.

"A mighty fine thing, indeed," said he, "would it be for me to go and disturb the rest of these illustrious noblemen, to say to them, 'Gentlemen, your servant Mouston is thirsty; would you allow him to drink?' What does it signify to M. de Bracieux, I ask you, whether I am thirsty or not?"

"It is a very expensive kind of wine," said Blaisois, shaking his head.

"If it were potable gold, Monsieur Blaisois," replied Mousqueton, "our masters would not debar themselves from it. Take note that the Baron de Bracieux alone is rich enough to drink a tun of Port, if he were obliged to pay a pistole a drop for it. Now, I do not see," continued Mousqueton, becoming more and more magniloquent in his pride, "since the masters do not refrain from it, why the valets should refrain either."

And Mousqueton, rising up, took the jug of beer, every drop of which he emptied into the scupper-hole, and then stalked majestically to the door that led to the other compartment.

"Ah! fastened," said he; "these devilish English — how suspicious they are!"

"Fastened!" said Blaisois, in a tone of disappointment not less keen than Mousqueton's. "Ah! plague take it! It is unlucky, especially as my stomach feels more and more upset."

Mousqueton turned to Blaisois with such a piteous countenance that it was evident he shared in a high degree the worthy fellow's disappointment.

"Fastened!" he repeated.

"But," hazarded Blaisois, "I have heard you relate, M. Mouston, that once in your youth, at Chantilly I think, you supported your master and yourself by taking partridges in a net, carp by a line, and bottles with a lasso."

"Certainly I did," responded Mousqueton; "it is the exact truth, and Grimaud can bear witness to it. But then there was an airhole to the cellar, and the wine was in bottles. I cannot throw the lasso through this partition, or draw to me with a pack-thread a cask of wine that may perhaps weigh two hundred weight."

"No; but you may raise two or three planks of the partition wall," said Blaisois, "and make a hole in one of the barrels with a gimlet."

Mousqueton opened his eyes immeasurably wide, and looking at Blaisois like a man astonished at finding in another man qualities for which he had not given him credit:

"It is true," said he, "that might be done; but a chisel is wanted to start the boards, and a gimlet to pierce the barrel."

"The tool-case!" said Grimaud, who had just finished balancing his accounts.

"Ah, yes! the tool-case!" said Mousqueton; "that I should not have thought of it!"

Grimaud, in fact, was not only the steward of the troop, but also its armourer; and besides an account-book, he had a tool-case. Now, as Grimaud was an extremely cautious and provident man, this tool-case, carefully rolled up in his valise, was furnished with every instrument of ordinary necessity.

It therefore contained a gimlet of a reasonable size.

Mousqueton seized it.

Nor had he far to seek for a chisel. The poignard he carried at his girdle would be an excellent substitute for it. Mousqueton now sought for a corner where the boards were a little separated, and this he had not much difficulty in finding; so he set to work forthwith.

Blaisois watched his proceedings with admiration mingled with impatience, venturing an occasional observation, replete with intelligence and lucidity, on the mode of drawing a nail or getting a leverage.

In a very short time Mousqueton had pried off three planks.

"There!" said Blaisois.

Mousqueton was the exact antipode of the frog in the fable, which thought itself larger than it really was. Unfortunately, although he had managed to diminish his name by one-third, it was not the same with his paunch. He tried to pass through the opening that he had made, but perceived with grief that he must remove two or three more boards at least, to make the hole for his size.

He heaved a sigh and drew back to renew his labours.

But Grimaud, who had finished his accounts, had got up, and, being profoundly interested in the operation that was going on, had approached his two companions, and seen the fruitless efforts made by Mousqueton to reach the land of promise.

"I!" said Grimaud.

This single word from him was worth a whole sonnet, which alone, as is well known, is worth a whole poem.

Mousqueton turned round.

"What you?" demanded he.

"I will pass through."

"It is true," said Mousqueton, looking at his friend's long, lank figure, "you will pass, and very easily too."

"That is all right," said Blaisois; "he knows the full

barrels, for he has been already in the cellar with the Chevalier d'Artagnan. Let M. Grimaud pass through, Monsieur Mouston."

"I could have got through as well as Grimaud," said Mousqueton, a little piqued.

"Yes; but it would have taken longer, and I am very thirsty. My stomach feels worse and worse."

"Go through, then, Grimaud," said Mousqueton, giving to him who was about to enter upon the expedition in his place the beer-jug and the gimlet.

"Rinse the glasses," said Grimaud. And giving Mousqueton a friendly nod intended as a request that he would pardon his finishing an expedition so brilliantly commenced by another, like a serpent he glided through the opening and disappeared.

Blaisois seemed ravished with delight, full of ecstasy. Of all the exploits performed since their arrival in England by the extraordinary men to whom they had the fortune of being attached, this positively seemed to him the most miraculous.

"You will now see," said Mousqueton, looking at Blaisois with an air of superiority which Blaisois did not attempt to resent, — "you will now see, Blaisois, how we old soldiers drink when we are thirsty."

"The cloak," said Grimaud, from the bottom of the hold.

"That is right," said Mousqueton.

"What does he want?" inquired Blaisois.

"That we should cover the opening with a cloak."

"What for?" demanded Blaisois.

"Simpleton!" said Mousqueton; "what if any one should come in?"

"Ah! that's true!" exclaimed Blaisois, with still more perceptible admiration. "But he will not be able to see clearly."

"Grimaud always sees clearly," replied Mousqueton, "by night as well as by day."

"He is very fortunate," said Blaisois. "When I have no candle I cannot take two steps without knocking myself against something."

"That's because you have not seen service," said Mousqueton; "if you had you would have learnt to pick up a needle in a dark closet. But silence! Some one is coming, I think."

Mousqueton gave a low whistle, a signal of alarm familiar to the lacqueys in the days of their youth, resumed his place at the table, and made a sign to Blaisois to do the same.

Blaisois obeyed.

The door opened, and two men made their appearance, enveloped in their cloaks.

"What!" said one of them; "not yet in bed at a quarter past eleven? It is contrary to rules. In a quarter of an hour let every light be out and every one snoring."

The two men went to the door of the compartment into which Grimaud had crept, opened the door, entered, and shut it after them.

"Ah!" said Blaisois, shuddering, "he is lost."

"Grimaud is a sharp old fox," muttered Mousqueton.

And they waited with watchful ears and bated breath.

Ten minutes glided away, during which they heard no sound that could make them suspect that Grimaud was detected.

When this period had elapsed, Mousqueton and Blaisois saw the door reopen. The two men in cloaks came out, shut the door with the same precaution that they had used on entering, and departed, renewing their injunctions to retire to bed and put out the lights.

"Shall we obey?" demanded Blaisois. "All this seems to me crooked."

"They said in a quarter of an hour — we have still five minutes," replied Mousqueton.

"Supposing we inform our masters of this?"

"Let us wait for Grimaud," said Mousqueton.

"But if they have killed him?"

"Grimaud would have cried out."

"You know that he is almost dumb."

"We should have heard the blow."

"But if he does not return?"

"Here he is!"

In fact, at this very moment Grimaud pushed aside the cloak that concealed the opening, and thrust through that opening a face as pale as death; his eyes, starting with fright, offered to the sight a small pupil in the centre of a large white circle. He held in his hand the beer-jug full of some sort of substance, brought it into the range of the light by the smoky lamp, and murmured the simple monosyllable "*Oh!*" with an expression of such profound terror that Mousqueton recoiled in consternation and Blaisois thought to faint away.

Both of them, however, cast a look of curiosity into the jug. It was full of gunpowder!

Once convinced that the vessel was loaded with gunpowder instead of wine, Grimaud rushed to the hatchway, and with one bound reached the cabin, where the four friends were sleeping. Having reached the cabin, he gently pushed open the door, which in opening immediately awoke D'Artagnan, who was lying down behind it.

Scarcely had he seen Grimaud's agitated face, before he understood that something extraordinary had happened, and was just going to utter an exclamation. But Grimaud, with a motion more rapid than speech itself, put his finger on his lips, and, with a puff that no one would have suspected from such a lean body, blew out the little night-lamp at three paces' distance.

D'Artagnan raised himself on his elbow. Grimaud knelt down, and then, with outstretched neck and all his senses unnaturally excited, he poured into his ear a recital which, to say the truth, was of itself sufficiently dramatic to need no aid from action or the play of the features.

During this recital Athos, Aramis, and Porthos were sleeping like men who have had no rest for a week. In the middle deck Mousqueton was knotting his points by way of precaution; while Blaisois, overwhelmed with consternation, his hair bristling on his head, tried to do the same thing.

This is what had occurred:

Scarcely had Grimaud disappeared through the opening, and found himself in the first compartment, before he began his search, and soon discovered a barrel. He rapped upon it: it was empty. He then went to another: that was also empty. But the third on which he tried the experiment gave forth such a dull sound that there was no possibility of mistake. Grimaud was sure that it was full.

So he therefore stopped at this, felt about for a place where he might pierce it with his gimlet, and, whilst feeling, laid his hand upon a spigot.

"Good!" said Grimaud; "this will save me trouble."

And he held down the jug, turned the spigot, and felt that the contents were gently flowing from one receptacle to the other.

Grimaud, having first taken the precaution to close the spigot, was just going to raise the jug to his lips, being too conscientious to carry any liquor to his companions for the *quality of* which he could not answer, when he heard the

signal of alarm given by Mousqueton. Suspecting some night round, he slipped in between two barrels and hid behind a cask.

A minute after the door opened and shut again, after having afforded entrance to the two men in cloaks.

One of them bore a glass lantern, carefully closed, and so high that the flame could not reach the top. Moreover, the glass itself was covered with a sheet of white paper, which softened, or rather absorbed, both the light and the heat.

This man was Groslow.

The other held in his hand something that was long, flexible, and rolled up, like a whitish rope. His face was covered by a very broad-brimmed hat. Grimaud, thinking that the same desire as his own had brought them to the hold, and that, like himself, they came to pay a visit to the Port wine, squatted closer and closer behind his cask, saying to himself that, after all, should he be discovered, the crime was not very great.

When the two men reached the barrel behind which Grimaud was concealed, they stopped.

"Have you got the fuse?" said the one that carried the lantern.

"Here it is," replied the other.

When the last one spoke Grimaud started, and felt a shudder strike even to the marrow of his bones. He cautiously rose so that his head might surmount the top of the cask, and under the large hat he discovered Mordaunt's pale face.

"How long will this match last?" demanded he.

"About five minutes, more or less," said the captain.

This voice also was known to Grimaud. His eyes went from one to the other, and after Mordaunt he recognised Groslow.

"Then," said Mordaunt, "you must go and warn your men to be ready, without telling them why. Is the boat following the vessel?"

"As a dog follows its master, at the end of a hempen leash."

"Then, when the clock points to a quarter-past twelve call together your men, and get into the boat without noise."

"After having lighted the slow match?"

"That is my business. I wish to be certain of my vengeance. Are the oars in the boat?"

"Everything is ready."

"Good."

"Then all is settled."

Mordaunt knelt down and fastened one end of his match the spigot, that he might have nothing more to do than ignite the other end. Then, having finished this operation, drew out his watch.

"You understand, at a quarter-past twelve," he said, ris up; "that is to say," — he looked at his watch, — "in twe minutes."

"Perfectly, sir," replied Groslow; "only I would obse for the last time, that there is considerable danger in the o you reserve for yourself, and that it would be much better you to set one of the men to fire the train."

"My dear Groslow," said Mordaunt, "you know the Fre proverb: '*One is never well served except by one's-self.*' I put this into practice."

Grimaud had heard, if he had not understood, everythi but the scene he witnessed supplied any defect there might in his comprehension of the language. He had seen recognised the two mortal enemies of the Musketeers; had seen Mordaunt arrange the fuse; he had heard proverb, which, for his greater facility, Mordaunt had repea in French. Then, lastly, he had felt and felt again the tents of the pitcher he held in his hand; and, instead of liquid that Mousqueton and Blaisois expected, the grains o thick powder crackled and crumbled under his fingers.

Mordaunt and the captain departed. At the door t stopped and listened.

"Do you hear how they sleep?" said Mordaunt.

In fact, Porthos's snoring was heard through the boardi

"God delivers them into our hands!" said Groslow.

"And, this time, the devil himself could not save them said Mordaunt.

And they both left the place.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE PORT WINE. (*Continuation.*)

GRIMAUD waited till he heard the bolt grate in the lock; and when he was quite sure that he was alone, he groped along the partition.

"Ah!" said he, wiping the large drops of perspiration from his forehead, "how fortunate it was that Blaisois was thirsty!"

He made haste to pass through his opening, thinking still that he was dreaming; but the sight of the powder in the jug proved to him that this dream was a deadly nightmare.

D'Artagnan, as may be imagined, heard all these details with increasing interest; and without waiting till Grimaud had finished, he arose without any noise, and applying his mouth to Aramis's ear, who slept on his left, and touching his shoulder at the same time, to prevent any hasty movement:

"Chevalier," said he, "get up without the slightest noise."

Aramis awoke. D'Artagnan repeated the injunction, at the same time pressing his hand. Aramis obeyed.

"You have Athos at your left," said he; "caution him, as I have cautioned you."

Aramis easily awoke Athos, whose sleep was light, as is generally the case in delicate and nervous temperaments; but they had more difficulty in rousing Porthos. He was going to ask for the causes and reasons for this interruption of his sleep, which appeared to him to be very unpleasant, when D'Artagnan, in lieu of all explanation, laid his hand on his mouth.

Then our Gascon, stretching out his arms and drawing them all to him, encircled the three heads in such a manner that they touched one another.

"Friends," said he, "we must instantaneously leave this vessel, or we are all dead men."

"Bah!" said Athos; "what now?"

"Do you know who is the captain of this vessel?"

"No."

"Captain Groslow!"

A shudder of the three Musketeers informed D'Artagnan that his speech began to make some impression on his friends.

"Groslow!" said Aramis; "the devil!"

"Who is this Groslow?" demanded Porthos. "I can remember him."

"He who broke Parry's head, and who is at this mon preparing to break ours."

"Oho!"

"And his mate — do you know who he is?"

"His mate? He has none," said Athos. "There i mate in a felucca carrying four men."

"Ay, but M. Groslow is not an ordinary captain. He mate, and that mate is M. Mordaunt."

This time it was more than a shudder among the M teers — it was almost a cry. These invincible men were jected to the mysterious and fatal influence that this exercised over them, and felt a sort of terror merely to h spoken.

"What can we do?" said Athos.

"Take possession of the felucca," said Aramis.

"And kill him," said Porthos.

"The felucca is mined," said D'Artagnan. "Those t that I took for casks full of Port wine are barrels o powder. When Mordaunt finds himself detected, h blow up everything — friends and foes; and, faith! h gentleman of too bad a character for me to wish to ma appearance in his society, either in heaven or in hell."

"You have, then, a plan?" demanded Athos.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Have you confidence in me?"

"Command," said the Musketeers at the same momen

"Well, then, come!" And D'Artagnan went to a w so low as to be like a porthole, but large enough for a m crawl through. He turned and opened it cautiously.

"That is the way," said he.

"The devil!" said Aramis; "it is cold, my dear frien

"Remain if you like; but I forewarn you that you wil be hot enough."

"But we cannot reach land by swimming."

"The boat is following in our wake; we will reach cut the rope — that's all. Come along, gentlemen."

"One moment," said Athos; "our lacqueys?"

"Here we are," said Mousqueton and Blaisois, whon

aud had brought, so as to concentrate all their forces in the abin, and who, without being seen, had entered by the hatch-ay, which was next the cabin.

Yet the three friends remained motionless before the rrible sight that D'Artagnan had disclosed to them by rais-g the window, and which they could see through this narrow pening.

In fact, whoever has once seen it, well knows that nothing more profoundly impressive than a swelling sea, rolling its ark billows along, with their hoarse murmurs, under the wan ght of a winter's moon.

"Cordieu! We hesitate, it seems," said D'Artagnan. "If we aver, what will our lacqueys do?"

"I do not hesitate," said Grimaud.

"Sir," said Blaisois, "I warn you, I only know how to swim rivers."

"And I do not know how to swim at all," said Mousqueton.

In the meantime D'Artagnan had slipped through the open-ng.

"So your mind is made up, is it?" asked Athos.

"Yes," replied the Gascon. "Come, Athos, you, who are he perfection of a man, command intellect to govern matter. ou, Aramis, give the word to the lacqueys; and you, Porthos, ill any one that may oppose us."

And D'Artagnan, after having pressed Athos's hand, choos-ng the moment when by the pitching of the feluca the stern ipped, had only to let himself slip into the water, which lready reached up to his waist.

Athos followed him, even before the vessel had pitched for-ard; and as she rose, the rope that fastened the boat to her tern was seen whipping from the water.

D'Artagnan swam to this rope and reached it.

There he held on to it by one hand, with his head just bove the surface of the water. An instant afterwards he as joined by Athos.

Two more heads were now seen: they were those of Aramis nd Grimaud.

"Blaisois disturbs me," said Athos. "Did you not hear im say, D'Artagnan, that he only knew how to swim in ivers?"

"When one can swim at all, he can swim anywhere," said 'Artagnan. "To the boat! to the boat!"

"But Porthos? I cannot see him."

"Porthos is coming; do not trouble yourself about him; he swims like Leviathan himself."

In fact, Porthos had not yet made his appearance, in consequence of a scene, half ludicrous, half dramatic, that was going on with him, Blaisois, and Mousqueton as actors.

These last, frightened by the noise of the waves and the whistling of the wind, terrified by the sight of that dark abyss of waters boiling up from the deep, drew back instead of advancing.

"Come, come!" said Porthos; "into the water with you!"

"But," said Mousqueton, "I cannot swim; leave me here."

"And me too," said Blaisois.

"I assure you that I should only be in the way in that little boat," continued Mousqueton.

"And I am sure that I should be drowned before I reached it," added Blaisois.

"Well, then, I will choke you both, if you do not get out!" said Porthos, seizing them by the throat. "Out with you, Blaisois!"

A groan, stifled by Porthos's iron hand, was the sole response of Blaisois; for the giant, holding him by the neck and heels, made him glide like a plank through the window, and sent him head-foremost into the sea.

"Now, Mouston," said Porthos, "I hope you do not mean to abandon your master?"

"Ah, sir!" replied Mousqueton, with tears in his eyes, "why did you resume service? We were so well off at the Château de Pierrefonds!" And without any other reproach he became passive and obedient; and, whether from real devotion or from the example given in the case of Blaisois, Mousqueton pitched head-foremost into the sea — a sublime action in either case, for Mousqueton thought himself a dead man.

But Porthos was not the person thus to abandon his faithful companion. The master followed the valet so close that the plunge of each body made but one and the same sound; and when Mousqueton returned to the surface, quite blinded, he found himself supported by Porthos's large hand, and gliding toward the boat with the majesty of a marine god, and without any movement whatever.

At the same moment Porthos saw something whirling round within reach of his hand, and, seizing this something by the

ınd it was Blaisois, to whose aid Athos was just then

ırn, Count; I have no need of you," said Porthos.
one vigorous kick he rose like the giant Adamastor
he waves, and in three strokes rejoined his compan-

tagnan, Aramis, and Grimaud assisted Mousqueton and
into the boat. Then came Porthos, who, in clamber-
r the side, nearly upset the little craft.
l Athos?" inquired D'Artagnan.
·e I am," replied Athos, who, like a general covering
·eat, wished to be the last to enter the boat, and was
on by its gunwale. "Are you all safe?"
" said D'Artagnan. "Have you got your poignard,
"
."
n cut the rope and come in."
ɜ drew his poignard from his girdle and cut the rope:
ıcca left them astern and the boat remained stationary,
any other motion than that given by the waves.
ıe in, Athos," said D'Artagnan.
lie gave his hand to the Comte de la Fère, who also
s place in the boat.
was time," said the Gascon, "and you will soon see
ng curious."

CHAPTER LXXVII.

FATALITY.

CELY had D'Artagnan finished these words, before a
was heard on board the felucca, which began to be lost
nist and darkness.
ıt, as you can well understand," said the Gascon,
ɜ something."
ıe same moment a lantern was seen on the deck, delin-
ıome shadows behind it.
suddenly a terrible cry of despair was heard across
p; and as if this cry had chased away the clouds, the
ıt hid the moon was rent asunder, and the grey sails
rk rigging of the felucca were seen, traced against the

sky, silvered by its wan light. Dark shadows were running up and down the deck in dismay, and piteous cries accompanied their insensate course.

In the midst of these cries Mordaunt was seen on the top of the poop, with a torch in his hand.

Those shadows running up and down on the deck were Groslow and his men whom he had collected at the time set by Mordaunt. Mordaunt himself, after he had listened at the cabin door and assured himself that the Musketeers were still asleep, had gone down into the hold.

In fact, who could possibly have suspected what had just occurred?

So Mordaunt had opened the door — hurried to the slow-match; eagerly thirsting for revenge and confident that he should now obtain it, he had set fire to the fuse.

In the meantime, Groslow and his men had assembled at the stern.

"Haul in the painter," said Groslow, "and pull the boat alongside."

One of the men climbed into the chains, seized the rope and drew it toward him. It came without any resistance whatever.

"The rope is cut," cried the sailor, "and the boat is gone!"

"What! the boat gone?" cried Groslow, rushing toward the chains; "it is impossible!"

"It is so, however," said the sailor; "look yourself: there is nothing in our wake; besides, here is the end of the rope."

It was then that Groslow uttered that cry which the Musketeers had heard.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mordaunt, who, emerging from the hatchway, also rushed to the stern, with his torch in his hand.

"Our enemies are escaping us; they have cut the rope, and are off in the boat."

Mordaunt made but one leap to the cabin, which he burst open with a kick.

"Empty!" he cried. "Oh, the demons!"

"We must pursue them," said Groslow; "they cannot be far off, and we will run them down and sink them."

"Yes — but the train!" replied Mordaunt; "I have set fire to it!"

"To what?"

To the match."
A thousand thunders!" yelled Groslow, rushing toward
atchway. "Perhaps there is still time."
ordaunt — his features convulsed by hatred even more
by terror, and looking up to heaven with his haggard
as if to launch forth one last blasphemy — only re-
ded by a fearful laugh. Then, casting his torch before
he flung himself headlong into the sea.
t the same moment, and just as Groslow was setting his
on the first step of the hatchway, the vessel yawned like
crater of a volcano, and a stream of fire rushed heaven-
l, with an explosion equal to that of a hundred pieces of
on thundering forth at the same time. The air appeared
on fire, furrowed as it was by the broken masses of burn-
wreck. Then this awful light disappeared, the shattered
s of wreck fell one after the other into the mighty waters,
ng in the abyss, where they were extinguished; and in
next moment, with the exception of the vibration of the
it might have been supposed that nothing had happened.
ne felucca had disappeared from the surface of the deep,
Groslow and his three men were annihilated.
ne four friends had witnessed all this; not one of the
ils of this fearful drama had escaped them. One moment,
revealed by the dazzling light that had illumined the sea
league around, they might have been seen, each in a
rent attitude, and expressive of that terror which, in spite
eir hearts of bronze, they could not wholly express. Then
fiery rain fell all around them; the volcano was extin-
ed; and, as we have said, everything returned to dark-
— the floating boat and the roaring ocean.
ey remained for a moment silent and dejected. Porthos
D'Artagnan, who had each taken an oar, held them sus-
ed motionless above the water, leaning their whole
ht upon them, and grasping them with convulsed hands.
Faith!" said Aramis, who was the first to break this
h-like silence, "this time, I imagine, all is finished."
Here, my Lords! help! help!" cried some one, in a
ntable voice, the accents of which came across the waters
those of some spirit of the deep.
ll looked at one another. Even Athos was startled.
It is he — 't is his voice!" said he.
ll of them remained silent; for all had, like Athos, recog-

nised his voice. But their eyes, with dilated pupils, turned in the direction where the vessel had disappeared, making incredible efforts to pierce through the darkness.

In a moment they could distinguish a man, who approached them, swimming strongly.

Athos slowly stretched out his arm, pointing him out to his companions.

"Yes, yes," said D'Artagnan, "I can see him well enough."

"What? He here again!" said Porthos, puffing like a blacksmith's forge. "Well, he certainly is made of iron!"

"Oh, my God!" murmured Athos.

Aramis and D'Artagnan whispered to each other.

Mordaunt made a few more strokes, and then, raising one hand above the water, as a signal of distress:

"Pity, gentlemen! pity, in the name of Heaven! My strength is failing me and I shall die!'

The voice thus imploring assistance was so pathetic that it excited compassion in Athos's heart.

"Unhappy wretch!" said he.

"Truly," said D'Artagnan, "nothing more was wanted than that you should pity him. I verily believe that he is swimming toward us. Does he fancy, then, that we shall take him in? Row, Porthos, row." And setting the example, D'Artagnan plunged his oar into the sea, and with two pulls sent the boat twenty strokes from him.

"Oh! you will not abandon me! You will not leave me to perish! You will not be wholly devoid of pity!" cried Mordaunt.

"Aha!" said Porthos; "I fancy that we have got you at last, my fine fellow, and that you have now no other port of refuge than hell."

"Oh, Porthos!" murmured the Comte de la Fère.

"Let me alone, Athos. Verily, you become perfectly ridiculous, with your everlasting generosities! I positively declare that if he comes within ten feet of the boat, I will split his head with the oar."

"Oh! for mercy's sake, do not leave me, gentlemen! Mercy! — have pity on me!" cried the young man, his panting respiration sometimes making the icy water bubble up when his head almost disappeared under the billows.

D'Artagnan had never taken his eye from Mordaunt, and *having now* finished his conference with Aramis he got up.

"Sir," said he, addressing the swimmer, "be off with you, I beg of you. Your repentance is too recent for us to have much confidence in it. Remember that the vessel in which you wished to grill us all is still smoking some feet under water, and that the situation in which you are at present is a bed of roses compared with that in which you wished to place us, and in which you have placed M. Groslow and his companions."

"Gentlemen," said Mordaunt, in accents of utter despair, "I swear to you that my repentance is sincere. Gentlemen, I am so young — I am scarcely twenty-three years old! Gentlemen, I have been dragged along by a natural resentment; I wished to avenge my mother; and you yourselves would all have done as I have."

"Pooh!" said D'Artagnan, seeing that Athos was becoming more and more affected; "that depends."

Mordaunt had not more than three or four strokes to make to reach the boat, for the approach of death seemed to give him supernatural strength.

"Alas!" he replied, "I must die, then. You will kill the son as you killed the mother! And yet I was not to blame. According to all rules, human and divine, a son ought to avenge his mother. And besides," added he, clasping his hands, "if it be a crime, as I repent, and as I demand pardon for it, I ought to be forgiven."

And, as if his strength failed him, he appeared to be no longer able to keep himself above water, and a wave passed over his head, stifling his voice.

"Oh! this lacerates my heart!" said Athos.

Mordaunt reappeared.

"And as for me," said D'Artagnan, "I say that it is necessary to put an end to all this. You, sir, — the assassin of your uncle — the executioner of King Charles — the incendiary, — I promise to let you sink to the bottom, or, if you come within reach of the boat, to split your head with the oar."

Mordaunt, as if in the agonies of despair, made a stroke. D'Artagnan grasped his oar with both his hands. Athos rose up.

"D'Artagnan! D'Artagnan!" he exclaimed: "D'Artagnan, my son! I beseech you! The unhappy wretch is dying; and it is frightful to let a man die without stretching out a hand to him, when it is only necessary to do so to save him. Oh,

my heart forbids such an action! I cannot resist its impulses; he must live!"

"Mordieu!" replied D'Artagnan, "why not at once give yourself up, bound hand and feet, to this wretch? That will soon be done. Ah! Comte de la Fère, you wish to perish through him. Well, then, I — your son, as you call me — I do not wish it."

This was the first time that D'Artagnan had ever resisted an appeal which Athos made to him as his son.

Aramis coolly drew his sword, which he had brought between his teeth as he swam.

"If he lays a finger on the edge of the boat I will cut his hand off, regicide that he is," said he.

"And I," said Porthos, — "wait"—

"What are you going to do?" asked Aramis.

"Throw myself into the water and strangle him."

"Oh, gentlemen!" exclaimed Athos, with irresistible pathos, "let us be men — let us be Christians!"

D'Artagnan emitted a sigh like a groan, Aramis lowered his sword, Porthos sat down again.

"Look at him," said Athos, — "look! Death is painted on his face, his powers are exhausted; one minute more, and he sinks to the bottom of the abyss. Ah! do not entail upon me this horrible remorse — do not force me to die of shame, my friends! Grant me the life of this unhappy man — I will bless you — I will"—

"I am dying!" murmured Mordaunt; "help! help!"

"Let us gain one minute," said Aramis, leaning down to D'Artagnan's ear; "one stroke of the oar," he added, whispering to Porthos.

D'Artagnan made no answer, either by word or gesture; he began to feel himself moved, partly by Athos's entreaties, partly by the spectacle before his eyes. Porthos alone gave a stroke with his oar; and as this stroke had no counterpoise, the boat only turned half round, and this motion brought Athos nearer the dying man.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Fère!" exclaimed Mordaunt — "Monsieur le Comte de la Fère! I address you! I supplicate you! Have pity on me! Where are you, Monsieur Comte de la Fère? I can no longer see — I am dying — help! help!"

"Here I am, sir," said Athos, leaning down and stretching

out his arm to Mordaunt with that dignified generosity habitual to him. "Here I am. Take my hand and get into our boat."

"I prefer not to look," said D'Artagnan; "this weakness is repugnant to me."

And he turned to his two friends, who crowded down in the bottom of the boat, as if they feared even to touch him to whom Athos did not fear to reach his hand.

Mordaunt made one final effort, raised himself, seized the hand that was held out to him, and clutched it with the violence of a last hope.

"Very well!" said Athos; "put your other hand here."

And he offered him his shoulder as a second support, so that his head almost touched Mordaunt's, and these two deadly enemies seemed to embrace each other like two brothers.

Mordaunt clutched Athos's collar with his convulsed fingers.

"Good, sir," said the Count; "now you are saved; be calm."

"Ah, my mother!" exclaimed Mordaunt, with a look of fire and an accent of indescribable hatred; "I can only offer you one victim; but it shall at least be the one whom you yourself would have chosen!"

And while D'Artagnan was uttering a cry, Porthos raising his oar, and Aramis seeking for an opportunity of striking Mordaunt, a fearful jerk was given to the boat, and Athos was drawn into the water; while Mordaunt, with a triumphant cry, clasped the neck of his victim, and, to paralyse his efforts, encircled his legs with his own — just as a serpent might have enfolded its prey.

For a moment, without uttering a cry, without calling for help, Athos endeavoured to keep himself on the surface of the water; but the weight drawing him down, he gradually disappeared, and nothing was to be seen but his long hair floating on the waters. Then everything disappeared, and a large bubbling whirlpool — itself soon lost — alone indicated the spot where the two had been engulfed.

Mute with horror, motionless, choked by indignation and terror, the three friends remained with mouths open, eyes dilated, and arms extended. They were like statues, and yet their hearts could be heard beating. Porthos was the first to recover himself, and, tearing his hair:

"Oh!" he exclaimed, with a sob that must have been ex-

cruciating, — "oh, Athos, Athos, noble heart! Woe! woe! that we should have allowed you thus to die!"

"Oh! yes," repeated D'Artagnan, "woe to us!"

"Woe!" murmured Aramis.

At this very moment, in the midst of the vast circle illumined by the rays of the moon, and about four or five fathoms from the boat, the same sort of whirlpool that had announced that something had been swallowed up was renewed, and they saw appear, first some hair, then a pale face with wide-open but lifeless eyes, then a body, which, after rising even to its bust above the sea, slowly turned over on its back, at the caprice of the billows.

A poignard, the golden hilt glittering in the moonlight, was buried up to the hilt in the corpse's breast.

"Mordaunt! Mordaunt! Mordaunt!" exclaimed the three friends; "'t is Mordaunt!"

"But Athos?" said D'Artagnan.

Suddenly the boat tipped to one side under the influence of an unexpected weight, and Grimaud sent forth a shout of joy. All turned round, and Athos, pale as a corpse, with dull eyes and trembling hand, was perceived, leaning on the edge of the boat. Eight brawny arms quickly lifted him up, and in an instant he found himself warmed, reanimated, and recovering, under the caresses and embraces of his friends, who were intoxicated with joy.

"But are you not wounded?" asked D'Artagnan.

"No," replied Athos. "And he?"

"Oh, he! This time, thank God! he is dead enough. Look!"

And D'Artagnan, forcing Athos to look in the direction indicated, pointed out to him Mordaunt's body floating on the waves; though it was sometimes submerged, sometimes lifted up, it appeared as if it still pursued the four friends with a look of insult and mortal hatred.

At last it sank. Athos had followed it with an eye still expressive of sorrow and pity.

"Bravo, Athos!" said Aramis, with an effusiveness very rare with him.

"What a splendid blow!" exclaimed Porthos.

"I have a son," said Athos, "and I wished to live."

"After all, see how God has spoken!" said D'Artagnan.

"*I did* not kill him," murmured Athos, "but Fate!"

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

WHEREIN, AFTER HAVING NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING ROASTED, MOUSQUETON WAS VERY NEAR BEING EATEN.

DEEP silence long reigned in the boat after the terrible scene we have just recounted. The moon, which had shown itself for a short time, as if God had wished that no detail of this event should be concealed from the spectators' eyes, disappeared behind the clouds; everything returned to that darkness, so frightful in all deserts, and more particularly on that liquid desert, the ocean. Nothing was now heard except the whistling of the west wind over the crests of the waves.

Porthos was the first to break silence.

"I have seen many things," said he, "but nothing ever affected me so much as what I have just seen. And yet, agitated as I am, I declare that I feel excessively happy. I have a hundred pounds weight, at least, removed from my heart, and at length I breathe freely."

And Porthos breathed with a sound that did honour to the vigorous play of his lungs.

"Porthos," said Aramis, "I will not say so much as you, for I am still anxious — so much so that I cannot believe my own eyes, I doubt what I have seen. I keep looking around the boat, and I expect every moment to see that wretch reappear, holding in his hand the poignard he had in his heart."

"I am quite easy about that," replied Porthos. "The blow was struck under the sixth rib, and buried even to the hilt. I do not reproach you for it, Athos: on the contrary, when one strikes one must strike that way. So now I live, I breathe, I am joyful."

"Do not be in haste to sing victory, Porthos," said D'Artagnan. "Never have we been in greater danger than at present; for man conquers man, but not one of the elements. Here we are at sea, at night, without a guide, in a cranky craft. Should one blast of wind upset our boat, we are all lost."

Mousqueton heaved a profound sigh.

"You are ungrateful, D'Artagnan," said Athos; "yes, ungrateful, to doubt Providence at the very moment when God has just saved us in a manner so miraculous. Do you

believe that His protecting hand has guided us through so many dangers only to abandon us at last? No. In short, we sailed with a westerly wind; it is still blowing."

Athos studied their position by the polar star.

"There is Charles's Wain; consequently, yonder is France. Let us drift with the wind, and if it does not change it will drift us toward the coast of Calais or Boulogne. Should the boat upset, we are sufficiently strong, and good swimmers enough, five of us at least, to right her, or to hold on by her should this effort be beyond our strength. We are now in the direct course of all the vessels bound from Dover to Calais or from Portsmouth to Boulogne; and if the water preserved their tracks, their wake would have marked a furrow in the very spot where we now are. At daybreak, therefore, we are certain to meet with some fishing-boat that will pick us up."

"But if we should not meet with one, and if the wind should turn to the north?"

"Then," said Athos, "it would be another thing: we should not touch land until we crossed the Atlantic."

"That means we should die of hunger," replied Aramis.

"It is more than probable," said the Comte de la Fère.

Mousqueton heaved a second sigh more lamentable than the first.

"Mouston, Mouston, what is the matter with you, that you are always groaning so?" asked Porthos. "It is becoming tiresome."

"I am cold, sir," replied Mousqueton.

"That is impossible," said Porthos.

"Impossible?" said the astonished Mousqueton.

"Certainly. You have a body covered with a bed of fat that renders it impenetrable to the air. There is something else; speak candidly."

"Well then, sir, this same bed of fat, on which you congratulate me, terrifies me."

"And why so, Mouston? Speak boldly; these gentlemen permit you."

"Because, sir, I remember that in the library of the Château de Bracieux there are many books of travels, and among them those of Jean Mocquet, the famous traveller of Henry IV.'s time."

"Well?"

"Well, sir," continued Mousqueton, "in those books, many

maritime adventures and events, like that which now threatens us, are spoken of."

"Proceed, Mouston," said Porthos. "This analogy is full of interest."

"Well, sir, Jean Mocquet says that under similar circumstances famished voyagers have the frightful habit of eating one another, and of beginning with" —

"With the fattest!" cried D'Artagnan, unable to restrain his laughter, notwithstanding the gravity of their situation.

"Yes, sir," replied Mousqueton, somewhat abashed by this hilarity; "and permit me to observe that I do not see what there can possibly be to laugh at in all this."

"This brave Mouston is devotion personified," resumed Porthos. "I would wager that you already saw yourself, in imagination, cut up and eaten by your master."

"Yes, sir; although the joy which you suppose I experience is not, I confess, without some mixture of sadness. Yet, sir, I should not so much regret the sacrifice, if I was certain that by dying I should still be useful to you."

"Mouston," said Porthos, much affected, "if we ever should see the Château de Pierrefonds again, you shall have as your own property, for yourself and your descendants, the vineyard that is just above the farm."

"And you shall name it the 'Devotion Vineyard,' Mouston," said Aramis, "to hand down to succeeding ages the memorial of your sacrifice."

"Chevalier," said D'Artagnan, laughing in turn, "you would have eaten Mouston without much repugnance, would you not, especially after two or three days' fasting?"

"Oh, faith, no," replied Aramis; "I should have preferred Blaisois; we have not known him so long."

During the exchange of these pleasantries, the chief object of which was to divert Athos's thoughts from the scene that had just passed, the valets, as may be supposed, with the exception of Grimaud, who considered himself free from any danger on this score, were not very comfortable.

So Grimaud, without taking any part in the conversation, and mute, as usual, kept rowing as hard as he could, with an oar in each hand.

"You are rowing, are you, Grimaud?" remarked Athos.

Grimaud nodded.

"Why are you rowing?"

"To keep warm."

In fact, while the other shipwrecked men were shivering with cold the silent Grimaud was in a dripping perspiration.

Suddenly Mousqueton uttered a shout of joy, and held a bottle above his head.

"Oh!" said he, presenting the bottle to Porthos, — "oh, sir, we are saved! The boat is victualled."

And feeling eagerly under the bench wherefrom he had drawn the precious sample, he brought forth successively a dozen bottles of the same kind, some bread, and a piece of salt beef.

It is needless to say that this discovery restored gayety to all, except Athos.

"Mordieu!" said Porthos, who, it may be remembered, was hungry even when he first set foot on the felucca, "it is astonishing how hungry emotions make one."

And he emptied a bottle at a draught, and ate, for his own share, a good third of the bread and beef.

"Now," said Athos, "sleep, or endeavour to sleep, gentlemen. I will keep watch."

To any other men but our hardy adventurers, such a proposition would have seemed derisive. In fact, they were wet to the bone, there was a freezing wind, and the feelings they had lately experienced might have sufficed to drive sleep from their eyelids. But as for these choice spirits, with their iron constitutions and their frames inured to every kind of fatigue, sleep invariably under all circumstances obeyed their call.

So in a few minutes each one of them, full of confidence in their pilot, had laid himself down according to his fancy, and was trying to profit by Athos's advice; and he, seated at the rudder, with his eyes fixed on the heavens, where, no doubt, he sought not only the route to France, but the face of God, remained alone, as he had promised, pensive and watchful, and directing the little craft in the right course.

After some hours' sleep, the sleepers were awakened by Athos.

The first light of the day had just begun to whiten the purple sea, and at the distance of about ten gunshots ahead a dark mass was visible, above which a triangular sail was spread, narrow and long, like a swallow's wing.

"A vessel!" exclaimed the three friends with one voice:

hile the lacqueys, on their part, expressed their joy in differ-
ıt tones.

It was, in fact, a Dunkirk flûte, bound for Boulogne.

The four masters, with Blaisois and Mousqueton, united
ıeir voices in one shout that rang over the elastic surface of
ıe waves; while Grimaud, without saying anything, put his
ıt on the top of an oar, to attract the attention of those whom
ıey were hailing.

In a quarter of an hour they were taken in tow by the
ɔat of this vessel, and soon after they found themselves
ı her deck. Grimaud, in his master's name, offered the
ıptain twenty guineas; and, the wind being favourable, our
renchmen at nine in the morning were landed on their natal
ıil.

"Morbleu! how strong one feels here!" said Porthos, bury-
g his big feet in the sand. "Let any one pick a quarrel with
e now, — frown at me or tickle me, — and he shall see whom
ɜ has to deal with! Morbleu! I would set a whole kingdom
. defiance!"

"And I," said D'Artagnan, "would advise you not to sound
rth your defiance too loudly, Porthos; for it appears to me
at they are staring at us here."

"Pardieu!" said Porthos, "they are admiring us."

"Well," replied D'Artagnan, "I cannot take any pride in it,
ɔrthos. All I see is some men in black robes; and, in our
ıuation, I confess that these men in black alarm me."

"They are customs clerks of the port," said Aramis.

"Under the other Cardinal — I mean the great one," said
:hos, "they would have paid more attention to us than to
ɜrchandise; but under this man they will pay more attention
merchandise than to us — so do not disturb yourselves, my
ıends."

"I am not so sure of that," said D'Artagnan, "and I am
ing to take to the downs."

"But why not the town?" said Porthos. "I should much
efer a good inn to these frightful deserts of sand, which God
eated merely for rabbits. Besides, I am hungry."

"Do as you like, Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "but I am con-
nced that the safest plan, for men in our situation, is to strike
ɔr the open country."

And D'Artagnan, certain of carrying the majority with him,
ıade for the downs, without waiting for Porthos's answer.

[illegible] D'Artagnan, "let us separa[illegible] [illegible] resolution: but D'Artag[illegible] [illegible] pressing his hand, that he ought [illegible] [illegible] to those inti[illegible] [illegible] whose intellectual superiority [illegible] [illegible] nature. So he swallo[illegible] [illegible] from his mouth.

[illegible] we separate [illegible] asked Athos.

[illegible] D'Artagnan, "we — that is, Porthos [illegible] [illegible] M. de Mazarin: and [illegible] we served Charles I.: that is [illegible] with the Comte de la Fère [illegible] [illegible] crime is avowed: by return [illegible] [illegible] and in doubt men g[illegible] [illegible] M. de Mazarin over a good [illegible]"

[illegible] Porthos.

[illegible] Athos, "that we are your prisoners — [illegible] [illegible] all absolved from our parol[illegible] [illegible] as prisoners to Paris"—

[illegible] in D'Artagnan. "I am sorry [illegible] a man of [illegible] should be always uttering s[illegible] [illegible] as would make the scholars of the third class bl[illegible] [illegible] D'Artagnan addressing Aramis [illegible]

l, would become a tragedy that would destroy all four of us. sides, should any misfortune happen to two of our number, uld it not be better that the other two should be at liberty xtricate them — to creep about, to mine and sap — in fine, eliver them? And then, who knows whether we may not in separately — you from the Queen, we from Mazarin — pardon that would be refused to us united? Come, Athos Aramis, do you take to the right; while you, Porthos, will e to the left with me. Let these gentlemen strike through ndy, and let us get to Paris by the shortest route."

But should we be arrested on the road, how shall we ally inform one another of this catastrophe?" demanded nis.

Nothing easier," replied D'Artagnan: "let us agree on a from which we must not deviate. Go you to Saint y, then to Dieppe, and then follow the direct road to s. We will proceed by Abbeville, Amiens, Péronne, Com- e, and Senlis; and in every tavern, in every house where top, we will write on the wall with the point of a knife, the window with a diamond, a token that may guide the rches of those who are free."

Ah, my friend," said Athos, "how I should admire the urces of your head, if I were not compelled to pay homage hose of your heart."

nd he gave D'Artagnan his hand.

And has the fox cleverness, Athos?" said the Gascon, th a shrug of his shoulders. "No; it knows how to gobble poultry, to balk the hunters, and to find its way by night well as by day — that is all. Well, is it settled?"

"Yes, it is."

"Then let us divide the money," said D'Artagnan; "there ought to be about two hundred pistoles remaining. How much is there left, Grimaud?"

"One hundred and eighty half-louis, sir."

"That is it. Ah, vivat! there is the sun. Good morning, friend sun! Although you are not the same here as in Gascony, I know you again, or rather I pretend to do so. Good morning to you! It is a long time since I have seen you."

"Come, come, D'Artagnan," said Athos, "do not assume too much mockery; the tears are in your eyes. Let us always be open and candid with one another; that frankness ought always to bring out our good qualities."

"Well, then," replied D'Artagnan, "do you think, Athos, that one can coldly part with two such friends as you and Aramis, and at a time when there may be some danger?"

"No," said Athos; "so come to my arms, my son!"

"Mordieu!" said Porthos, sobbing, "I verily believe that I am crying. How silly it is!"

And the four friends made one group as they embraced one another. These men, united by the bonds of fraternity, had certainly now but one soul.

Blaisois and Grimaud were to follow Athos and Aramis. Mousqueton sufficed for D'Artagnan and Porthos.

The money was, as usual, divided with fraternal exactness. Then, after having shaken one another's hands and given reiterated assurances of eternal friendship, the gentlemen separated, each party to take the road agreed upon, but not without turning round, not without again sending back some words of affection which were repeated by the echoes of the downs.

At length they were lost to each other's sight.

"*Sacrebleu!* D'Artagnan," said Porthos, "I must needs tell you immediately — for I can never lock up in my heart anything against you — I have not recognised you in this affair."

"And why so?" demanded D'Artagnan, with his sly smile.

"Because, if, as you say, Athos and Aramis are incurring real danger, this is not the moment to abandon them. For my part, I confess that I was much inclined to follow them, and have half a mind, even now, to rejoin them, in spite of all the Mazarins in the world."

"You would be right, Porthos, if it were indeed so," replied D'Artagnan; "but learn one little trifling circumstance, which, small as it is, will probably change the course of your ideas. Those gentlemen are not the ones who run the greatest danger, but ourselves; and we do not leave them to abandon them, but so as not to compromise them."

"Really!" said Porthos, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Yes, there is no doubt of it. If they should be arrested, they would simply be taken to the Bastille; while if that should happen to us, we should be executed on the Place de Grève."

"Oho!" said Porthos, "it is a long way from that to the *baron's* coronet you promised me, D'Artagnan."

"Bah! not so far as you imagine perhaps, Porthos. You know the proverb — 'Every road leads to Rome.'"

"But why do we incur greater danger than Athos and Aramis?" asked Porthos.

"Because they did no more than follow the orders they received from Queen Henrietta, while we have disobeyed those received from Mazarin; because, having set out as messengers to Cromwell, we became partisans of King Charles; because, instead of helping to cut off the royal head condemned those scoundrels, Mazarin, Cromwell, Joyce, Pride, Fairfax and the rest, we were very near rescuing him."

"Faith, that is true," said Porthos. "But can you imagine, dear friend, that, in the midst of his lofty occupations, Cromwell would have time to think" —

"Cromwell thinks of everything — Cromwell has time for everything; and believe me, my dear friend, we must not lose sight of it, for it is precious. We shall not be safe till we have killed Mazarin; and more than that" —

"Diable!" exclaimed Porthos; "and what shall we say to Turenne?"

"Let me alone for that; I have got my plan; he will laugh best who laughs last. Cromwell is very powerful, Mazarin is very crafty, but yet I prefer trying diplomacy against them, rather than against the late Mordaunt."

"There now! How agreeable it is to say — *the late Mordaunt*," said Porthos.

"Faith, and so it is!" replied D'Artagnan. "But forward!" And both of them, without losing a moment, went across country at a venture in the direction of Paris, followed by Mousqueton, who, after having been too cold all night, was, in a quarter of an hour, a great deal too hot.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE RETURN.

Athos and Aramis followed the route assigned to them by D'Artagnan, and had travelled as rapidly as possible. They thought that it would be more advantageous to them to be arrested near Paris than at a distance from it.

Every evening, in their fear of being arrested during the night, they traced, either on the wall or on the windows, the signal agreed upon; but to their great surprise, every morning on awaking they found themselves at liberty.

As they drew near Paris, the great events in which they had taken part, and which had been convulsing England, vanished like dreams; while on the other hand, those that had agitated Paris and the country during their absence were brought before their notice.

During their six weeks' absence, so many little events had taken place in France that they almost constituted a great event. The Parisians, on waking in the morning without their King and Queen, were much disturbed by this abandonment, and Mazarin's absence, so anxiously desired, did not compensate for that of the august fugitives.

The first feeling therefore that stirred Paris, when the flight to St. Germain became known, — the flight in which we cause our readers to be present, — was that kind of terror that seizes children when they awake in the night or in solitude. The Parliament was excited, and it was decided that a deputation should be sent to the Queen, to entreat her no longer to deprive Paris of her presence.

But the Queen was as yet under the influence of the double feeling caused by the triumph at Lens and the pride of a flight so happily accomplished. The deputies were not denied the honour of a reception, but they were even compelled to wait on the high road, where the Chancellor Séguier (that same Chancellor whom we saw, in the first part of this history, so inflexibly pursuing a letter, even into the Queen's stays) came to deliver the ultimatum of the Court, declaring that unless the Parliament humbled itself before the royal majesty by condemning all those measures that had brought about the quarrel, Paris should be besieged on the following day; that in anticipation of this siege, the Duc d' Orléans was already occupying the bridge of Saint Cloud; and that M. le Prince, still glowing with his victory at Lens, held Charenton and Saint Der[illegible].

Unfortunately for the Court, to which a moderate answer would probably have added a goodly number of partisans, this threatening response produced a contrary effect to that which had been expected. It wounded the pride of the Parliament, which, finding itself vigorously supported by the citizens, whom Broussel's pardon had revealed the measure of their

rength, replied to these letters-patent by declaring that since ardinal Mazarin was notoriously the author of all these comotions he was pronounced the enemy of the King and the tate, and was commanded to leave the Court that same day nd France itself within a week; and after that period, should he not obey, it enjoined all the King's subjects to attack him.

This energetic answer, which the Court was far from anticipating, outlawed both Mazarin and Paris at the same time. It now only remained to be proved which would gain the day — the Parliament or the Court.

The Court made its preparations for attack, and Paris its preparations to defend itself. The citizens therefore were engaged in the work customary to them in times of insurrection, that is to say, in unpaving the streets and stretching chains across them, — when they saw the Prince de Conti, the brother of the Prince de Condé, and his brother-in-law, the Duc de Longueville, coming to their assistance, brought by the coadjutor.

From that time they recovered their confidence; for they had now two princes of the blood on their side, and, moreover, the advantage in numbers. It was on the 10th of January that this unhoped-for reinforcement came to the Parisians.

After a stormy debate the Prince de Conti was named the generalissimo of all the King's armies out of Paris, and the Duc de Elbeuf and the Duc de Bouillon, with the Maréchal de la Mothe, his lieutenant-generals. The Duc de Longueville, without title or command, was contented to assist his brother-in-law.

The Duc de Beaufort was come up from the Vendômois, bringing, say the chronicles, his lofty air, his beautiful long locks, and that popularity which ensured him the dominion of the Halles-places.

The Parisian army was therefore organized with that aptitude which the citizens exhibit in disguising themselves as soldiers, when they are urged forward to such a transformation by any feeling whatever. On the 19th the impromptu army had attempted a sortie, rather to convince itself and others of its actual existence than to attempt anything serious; carrying above their heads a flag on which was this singular device: *Nous cherchons notre roi — We seek our King.*

The following days were occupied in some trifling operations

that had no other result than the carrying off of some flocks of sheep and the burning of two or three houses.

This brought them to the first days of February; and the first of that month our four friends had disembarked at Boulogne and taken the road to Paris, each party by a different route.

About the close of the fourth day's march Athos's party cautiously avoided Nanterre, so that they might not fall into the hands of any of the Queen's party.

All these precautions were taken greatly against Athos's inclination; but Aramis had very judiciously reminded him that they had no right to be imprudent, since they had been charged with a most serious, indeed a sacred, mission by King Charles, and that this mission, received at the foot of the scaffold, could be accomplished only at the feet of the Queen.

Athos then yielded.

At the faubourgs our travellers found a strict guard. All Paris was in arms. The sentinel refused to let the two gentlemen pass, and called the sergeant.

The sergeant immediately came out, and assuming all the importance that the citizens are accustomed to take upon themselves when they have the honour of being clothed with military dignity:

"Who are you, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Two gentlemen," replied Athos.

"Whence do you come?"

"From London."

"What are you come to Paris for?"

"To execute a commission to the Queen of England."

"Ah, ça! Every one goes now to the Queen of England," replied the sergeant. "We have already at the guard-house three gentlemen whose passports are being examined, and who are going to the Queen of England. Where are yours?"

"We have none."

"What! You have no passports?"

"No! We are just arrived from England, as we have told you; and we are completely ignorant of the state of public affairs, having left Paris before the King's departure."

"Ah!" said the sergeant, with a sharp look, "you are Mazarinists, and want to come in here as spies."

"My dear friend," said Athos, who had till now allowed Aramis to reply, "if we were Mazarinists we should, on the

ontrary, have all the passports we might require. Believe
ıe, in your situation you should suspect, above all, those who
ave everything filled up according to rule."

"Go into the guard-house," said the sergeant; "you shall
xplain everything to the commanding officer."

He made a sign to the sentinel, who drew to one side; the
ergeant went first, and the two gentlemen followed him into
ıe guard-house.

This guard-house was entirely occupied by citizens and com-
on people, some of whom were drinking, some dicing, and
me making speeches.

In a corner, and out of sight, were the three first-comers
hose passports the officer was examining. This officer was
an adjoining room, the importance of his rank entitling
ım to a private apartment.

The first act of the new-comers and of those who had pre-
ously entered was to cast a rapid and searching glance at
ch other, from the opposite extremities of the guard-room.
he first were enveloped in long cloaks, in the folds of which
ıey were carefully concealed. One of them, shorter than his
mpanions, kept in the shade behind.

At the declaration made by the sergeant as he entered, that in
ll probability he was bringing in two Mazarinists, the three
ıen pricked up their ears and became attentive. The short-
st of the three, who had taken two steps forward, drew back
gain into the shade.

When it was known that the two gentlemen had no pass-
orts, it seemed to be the unanimous opinion of the guard-
oom that they would not be allowed to enter.

"Yes, gentlemen," said Athos, "it is, on the contrary, prob-
ble that we shall enter, for we seem to be engaged with men
f sense. There is one very simple method of acting: send
ur names to her Majesty the Queen of England, and if she
nswers for us, I hope that you will feel no hesitation in
llowing us to pass."

At these words the attention of the man concealed in the
hade redoubled, and was even accompanied by such a move-
ıent of surprise that his hat, being raised by the cloak that he
as more carefully adjusting, fell to the ground. He stooped
nd picked it up hastily.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" said Aramis, nudging Athos with his
lbow, "did you see?"

"What?" asked Athos.

"The face of the shortest of those three gentlemen?"

"No."

"It seemed to me — But it is impossible" —

At this moment the sergeant, who had gone into the private room to get the orders from the officer on guard, came out and handed a paper to the three gentlemen.

"Your passports are correct," said he. "Let these three men pass."

The three gentlemen bowed, and hastened to take advantage of the permission, and of the exit given them by the sergeant's order.

Aramis followed them with his eyes, and at the moment that the shortest passed him he pressed Athos's hand.

"What is the matter with you, then, my dear?" asked Athos.

"The matter — it is doubtless a vision."

Then, addressing the sergeant:

"Tell me, sir," he added, "do you know the three gentlemen who have just left the room?"

"I know them by their passports: they are Messieurs de Châtillon, De Flamarens, and De Bruy, three gentlemen Frondeurs who are going to join the Duc de Longueville."

"It is very strange," said Aramis, replying to his own thoughts rather than to the sergeant; "I thought that I detected Mazarin himself."

The sergeant burst out laughing. "What!" said he; "Mazarin hazard himself in that manner among us, to be hanged! Not such a fool as that!"

"Ah!" murmured Aramis, "I may be mistaken; I have not D'Artagnan's infallible eye."

"Who is talking of D'Artagnan here?" asked the officer, who at this moment appeared on the threshold.

"Oh!" exclaimed Grimaud, with staring eyes.

"What?" cried Athos and Aramis at the same time.

"Planchet!" replied Grimaud; "Planchet, with the gorget!"

"M. de la Fère and M. d'Herblay," exclaimed the officer, "returned to Paris! Oh, what delight to me, gentlemen!— for without doubt you are come to join the princes?"

"As you see, my dear Planchet," said Aramis; while Athos smiled, on seeing the important rank that the old comrade

of Mousqueton, Bazin, and Grimaud occupied in the city militia.

"And M. d'Artagnan, of whom you were speaking just now, M. d'Herblay, may I venture to inquire whether you know anything about him?"

"We left him four days ago, my dear friend, and everything induces us to imagine that he has reached Paris before us."

"No, sir; I am certain he has not entered the capital. Perhaps he stopped at Saint Germain."

"I do not think so. We agreed to meet at *La Chevrette*."

"I went there this very day."

"And had not the fair Madeline received any word from him?" asked Aramis, smiling.

"No, sir; and I will not conceal from you that she appeared very uneasy."

"After all," said Aramis, "no time has been lost as yet, and we have been very expeditious. Allow me, then, my dear Athos, before asking any more questions about our friend, to congratulate M. Planchet."

"Ah, Monsieur le Chevalier!" said Planchet, bowing.

"Lieutenant?" said Aramis.

"Lieutenant, with the promise of being captain."

"It is very fine," said Aramis; "and how came all these honours to be showered upon you?"

"In the first place, gentlemen, you are aware that I am the person who saved M. de Rochefort?"

"Yes, pardieu; he himself told us that."

"I very narrowly escaped being hanged on that occasion by Mazarin, which naturally made me even more popular than I was before."

"And thanks to this popularity" —

"No, thanks to something better. You also know, gentlemen, that I served in the regiment of Piedmont, where I had the honour of being a sergeant."

"Yes."

"Well, then, one day when no one could line up a crowd of armed citizens, who set off, some with the left and others with the right foot, I managed to make them all march with the same foot, and for this I was made lieutenant on the parade — the parade ground."

"And that is the explanation?" said Aramis.

on these pools, the boats loaded with patrols with their glittering arms, and the watchwords of the sentinels as they were exchanged at the different gates gave to Paris an aspect that quite dazzled Aramis, a man as susceptible of warlike impressions as could possibly be found.

They reached the Queen's abode, but were obliged to wait in the ante-chamber, her Majesty being just then engaged in giving an audience to some gentlemen who had brought news from England.

"And we also," said Athos to the servant who made them this reply, — "we also not only bring news from England, but we are just arrived from that country."

"What are your names, gentlemen?" inquired the servant.

"M. le Comte de la Fère and M. le Chevalier d'Herblay," replied Aramis.

"Ah! in that case, gentlemen," said the servant, on hearing these names, which the Queen had so often mentioned with hope, — "in that case it is quite another thing, and I believe her Majesty would not pardon me were I to make you wait a single instant. Follow me, then, I pray you."

And he went forward, followed by Athos and Aramis.

Having reached the room occupied by the Queen, he made them a sign to stop, and opening the door:

"Madame," said he, "I hope that your Majesty will pardon this disobedience of your orders, when she knows that those I come to announce are the Comte de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay."

At these two names the Queen uttered a cry of joy, which was heard by the gentlemen from the spot where they stood.

"Poor Queen!" murmured Athos.

"Oh, let them come in! Let them come in!" exclaimed the young Princess, rushing to the door.

The poor child was her mother's constant companion, and tried to make her forget the absence of her two brothers and her sister.

"Come in, come in, gentlemen," said she, opening the door herself.

Athos and Aramis entered. The Queen was seated in an armchair, and before her were standing two of the gentlemen they had met in the guard-room. They were M. de Flamarens and Gaspard de Coligny, Duc de Châtillon, brother of him *who was* killed in a duel seven or eight years before in the

'lace Royale — a duel that took place on account of Madame e Longueville.

When the two friends were announced, they drew back and xchanged some words in a low voice, evidently ill at ease.

"Well, gentlemen!" exclaimed the Queen of England, on eeing Athos and Aramis, "here you are at last, my faithful riends; but the couriers of the Government travel even more apidly than you do. The Court received intelligence of the tate of affairs in London at the very moment that you reached ne gates of Paris; and here are M. de Flamarens and M. de hâtillon, who bring me the latest information from her Majesty the Queen, Anne of Austria."

Aramis and Athos looked at each other; that tranquillity, nat joy even, that sparkled in the Queen's eyes, overwhelmed nem with stupefaction.

"Will you continue?" said she, addressing De Flamarens nd the Duc de Châtillon. "You were saying that his Majesty harles I., my august master, had been condemned to death, n defiance of the wishes of the majority of his subjects."

"Yes, madame," stammered out Châtillon.

Athos and Aramis looked at each other in still greater as-onishment.

"And that, having been led to the scaffold," continued the ueen — "to the scaffold! — oh, my Lord! oh, my King! — nd that, having been led to the scaffold, he had been saved y the indignant people."

"Yes, madame," replied Châtillon, in a voice so low that ne two friends, although very attentive, could with great ifficulty hear this affirmation.

The Queen clasped her hands with a generous gratitude, hilst the daughter passed her arm round her mother's neck nd kissed her, with tears of joy flowing from her eyes.

"Now, madame, nothing remains for us, except to present o your Majesty our humble respects," said Châtillon, on whom nis part appeared to weigh heavily, and who evidently blushed nder Athos's fixed and piercing eye.

"One moment longer," said the Queen, retaining them by a igu, — "one moment, I beseech you; for here are M. de la 'ère and the Chevalier d'Herblay, who, as you may have eard, are just returned from London, and who, as eye-witesses, will perhaps give you some particulars that you do not et know, and which you can communicate to the Queen, my

good sister. Speak, gentlemen, speak; I am attentive. Do not conceal anything from me; do not soften anything. So long as his Majesty is still alive, and that the royal honour is safe, everything else is indifferent to me."

Athos turned pale and laid his hand on his heart.

"Well, now!" said the Queen, who saw his movement and his palor; "speak then, sir, I entreat you."

"Pardon me, madame," replied Athos, "but I do not wish to add anything to the account which these gentlemen have given, until they themselves acknowledge that they have perhaps been mistaken."

"Mistaken!" exclaimed the Queen, almost suffocated. "Mistaken! Oh, my God! What has happened, then?"

"Sir," said M. de Flamarens to Athos, "if we are mistaken, the error originates with the Queen; and you have no intention, I imagine, to correct it, since that would give the lie to her Majesty."

"With the Queen, sir?" demanded Athos, in his calm and sonorous voice.

"Yes," replied Flamarens, lowering his eyes.

Athos sighed mournfully.

"May not the error rather originate with him who accompanied you, and whom we saw in the guard-room of the Barrière du Roule?" said Aramis, with his insulting politeness; "for if le Comte de la Fère and myself are not both mistaken, there were three of you when you entered Paris."

Châtillon and Flamarens started.

"But explain yourself, Count," said the Queen, whose anguish increased every moment. "I read despair upon your brow; your lips hesitate to announce some terrible news; your hands tremble — oh, my God! my God! what has happened?"

"Oh, Lord!" cried the young Princess, falling on her knees by her mother's side, "have pity on us."

"Sir," said Châtillon, "if you are the bearer of melancholy intelligence, you act most cruelly in announcing it to the Queen."

Aramis went up so closely to Châtillon as nearly to touch him. "Sir," said he, with compressed lip and sparkling eye, "you have not, I imagine, the presumption to wish to teach M. de la Fère and myself what we are to say here?"

During this short altercation Athos, with his hand still on his heart and his head bent, had gone up to the Queen.

"Madame," said he to her, in an agitated voice, "princes, who by their nature are superior to other men, have received from heaven souls capable of supporting greater misfortunes than the vulgar herd, for their hearts participate in their superiority. I ought not, therefore, I think, to act with a great Queen like your Majesty in the same manner as with a woman in my own rank of life. Queen, doomed to all martyrdom in this world, here is the result of the mission with which you deigned to honour us."

And Athos, kneeling before the Queen, who was panting with agitation, drew from his bosom, enclosed in the same box, the diamond order which the Queen had delivered to Lord de Winter before their departure, and the wedding ring which, before his death, Charles had intrusted to Aramis, and which, since he had received them, had never been out of Athos's possession.

He opened the box, and presented it to the Queen with a mute and profound grief.

The Queen seized the ring, pressed it convulsively to her lips, and without being able to emit a sigh, without the power even of sending forth a sob, she stretched her arms, turned pale, and fell insensible into the arms of her attendants and her daughter.

Athos kissed the hem of the robe of the unhappy widow; then rising, with a dignity that made a deep impression on those who were present: "I, Comte de la Fère," said he, "a gentleman who have never lied, — I swear, first in the presence of God, and then in the presence of this poor Queen, that everything that it was possible to do to save the King was done by us on the soil of England. Now, Chevalier," he added, turning towards D'Herblay, "let us go. We have performed our duty."

"Not yet," said Aramis: "there remains one word to say to these gentlemen."

And, turning to Châtillon:

"Sir," said he, "will you be so obliging as to leave the room, if it be only for a minute, to hear that word which I cannot speak before the Queen?"

Châtillon bowed an assent without answering.

Athos and Aramis went out first; Châtillon and Flamarens followed them. They went through the vestibule in silence; but on reaching a terrace on a level with a window, Aramis

led the way along this; it was quite solitary. At the window he stopped, and turning to the Duc de Châtillon:

"Sir," said he, "you took the liberty just now, it appears to me, to treat us very cavalierly. That was improper under any circumstances; but much more so on the part of men who came to bring the Queen the message of a liar."

"Sir!" exclaimed Châtillon.

"What, then, have you done with M. de Bruy?" asked Aramis ironically. "Is he gone perchance to change his countenance, which too much resembles Mazarin's? It is well known that there are a great number of Italian masks in use at the Palais Royal, from that of Harlequin to that of Pantaloon."

"You mean to provoke us, I think," said Flamarens.

"Ah! you only *think* so, gentlemen?"

"Chevalier! Chevalier!" said Athos.

"Let me alone," said Aramis sharply; "you know very well that I do not like these things to be procrastinated."

"Finish then, sir," said Châtillon, with a haughtiness not at all inferior to that shown by Aramis.

Aramis bowed. "Gentlemen," said he, "any other person than myself or the Comte de la Fère would cause you to be arrested, for we have some friends in Paris; but we offer you a means of departure without anxiety. Come and talk with us for five minutes, sword in hand, on this solitary terrace."

"Willingly," replied Châtillon.

"One moment, gentlemen!" exclaimed Flamarens; "I am well aware that the proposition is tempting, but at present it is impossible for us to accept it."

"Why so?" said Aramis, in his mocking tone; "is it the proximity of Mazarin that makes you so prudent?"

"Oh! do you hear, Flamarens?" said Châtillon; "not to answer it would be a stain on my name and honour."

"That is my opinion," said Aramis.

"You will not answer it, however," said Flamarens; "and these gentlemen will, I am sure, soon agree with me."

Aramis tossed his head with a gesture of indescribable insolence. Châtillon saw the gesture and placed his hand upon his sword.

"Duke," said Flamarens, "you forget that to-morrow you command an expedition of the very greatest importance, and that, selected by the Prince and favourably accepted by

e Queen, you are not your own master until to-morrow ening."

"So be it!—day after to-morrow morning, then," said ramis.

"Till day after to-morrow," said Châtillon, "is a long time, ntlemen."

"I am not the person who fixes this time and asks for this lay," retorted Aramis. "Besides, it appears to me," he ded, "that we might meet on this expedition."

"Yes, sir, you are right!" exclaimed Châtillon; "and with e greatest pleasure, if you will take the trouble of coming as r as the gates of Charenton."

"Faith! sir, to have the honour of meeting you, I would go the end of the world; much more, then, will I go a league or o for the same purpose."

"Very well. To-morrow, sir."

"You may depend upon me. So go and rejoin your Carnal. But first of all, swear by your honour that you will t inform him of our return."

"What! Conditions?"

"And why not?"

"Because it belongs to conquerors alone to require them, d you are not yet in that condition, gentlemen."

"Then let us draw immediately. It is quite the same thing us, who have not the command of to-morrow's expedition." Châtillon and Flamarens looked at each other. There was ch a tone of irony in Aramis's words and actions that Châlon, more especially, had great difficulty in bridling his ger. But on a word from Flamarens, he restrained himself.

"Well, then, so let it be," said he; "our companion, who-er he may be, shall know nothing of what has passed. But u, sir, on your part, promise me to be at Charenton to-orrow, do you not, sir?"

"Ah!" replied Aramis, "make yourselves perfectly easy on at score, gentlemen."

The four gentlemen bowed; but this time Châtillon and lamarens left the Louvre first, and Athos and Aramis fol-wed them.

"What is the meaning of this furious anger, Aramis?" ked Athos.

"Ah, pardieu! I have good reason to be angry with those hom I have just quarrelled with."

"Why, what have they done to you?"

"Why, they — But did you not see it?"

"No."

"They sneered when we swore that we had done our du in England. Now, they either believed it or they did r believe it. If they did believe it, they sneered with the int tion of insulting us; if they did not believe us, they insult us still more; and it is absolutely necessary to let them kn that we are good for something. After all, I am not sor that they have deferred the thing till to-morrow. I belie we have something better to do this evening than to draw o swords."

"What have we to do?"

"Eh, pardieu! we have to get possession of Mazarin."

Athos thrust out his lips contemptuously.

"Such expeditions do not suit me, you know, Aramis."

"Why so?"

"Because they resemble stratagems."

"Really, Athos, you would be a singular general of army: you would only fight in open daylight; you would se your adversary word of the very hour you meant to atta him; and you would be most careful that no attempt shou be made on him during the night, for fear that he shou accuse you of taking advantage of the darkness."

Athos smiled.

"You know," said he, "that no one can change his natu And, besides, do you rightly understand our position, a whether the arrest of Mazarin might not be rather an evil th an advantage — an inconvenience rather than a triumph?"

"Say at once, Athos, that you disapprove of my proposition

"No; on the contrary, I think that it is fair play. Neve theless" —

"Nevertheless what?"

"I think you ought not to have made those gentlemen swea that they would say nothing to Mazarin; for, by so doing, yo have almost engaged not to do anything yourself."

"I engaged for nothing, I assure you; I consider myself a perfectly free. But come, come!"

"Where?"

"To M. de Beaufort or M. de Bouillon; we will lay the circumstances before them."

"Yes, but on one condition: that we shall begin with the

coadjutor. He is a priest — he is skilled in cases of conscience; and we will lay ours before him."

"Ah!" said Aramis, "he will spoil all — he will appropriate all. Instead of commencing, let us end with him."

Athos smiled. It was evident that he had an idea at the bottom of his heart which he did not disclose.

"Very well," said he; "with whom shall we begin?"

"With M. de Bouillon, if you like; he is the first on our way."

"Now, you will allow me to do one thing, will you not?"

"What is that?"

"Let me go to the Hôtel du Grand-Empereur-Charlemagne, to greet Raoul."

"Why, certainly; I will go there with you, and we will both give him our greeting."

They took the boat that had brought them to the Louvre, and were carried to the market-place. There they found Grimaud and Blaisois, who were holding their horses; and all four proceeded to the Rue Guénégaud.

But Raoul was not at the Hôtel du Grand Roi. He had received a message from the Prince that morning, and had departed with Olivain as soon as he had received it.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE GENERALISSIMO'S THREE LIEUTENANTS.

According to arrangement Athos and Aramis, on leaving the Hôtel du Grand-Roi-Charlemagne, proceeded to the Duc de Bouillon's hôtel.

The night was dark, and although the silent and solitary hours were approaching there was no cessation of those thousands of noises that keep a besieged city awake. At every step they met with barricades, at each turn they came against chains stretched across the streets, each square was full of bivouacs of soldiers. The patrols were passing up and down exchanging the watchwards; messengers sent by the different chiefs were flying hither and thither; animated dialogues, showing the general excitement, were taking place between the pacific inhabitants, who were leaning out of their windows.

and the more warlike citizens, who were hastening to the streets, armed with partisan or arquebus.

Aramis and Athos had not proceeded a hundred before they were stopped by sentinels placed at the barricades who demanded the watchword; but they replied that they were going to the Duc de Bouillon's to give him some important information, and the sentinels were satisfied to give them a guide, who, under pretence of accompanying and showing the way for them, was ordered to watch them. This man had set off before them, singing:

"'*Ce brave Monsieur de Bouillon*
Est incommodé de la goutte.'"[1]

This was one of the newest triolets, composed of I know not how many couplets, in which every one was introduced.

On reaching the neighbourhood of the Hôtel de Bouillon they passed a small troop of three horsemen, who had all the watchwords, for they were proceeding without guide or escort, and who, on reaching the barricades, had only to exchange some words with those who guarded them, to be allowed to pass, with all the deference, no doubt, due to their rank. On seeing them Athos and Aramis stopped.

"Oho!" said Aramis, "do you see, Count?"

"Yes," replied Athos.

"What do you think of these three horsemen?"

"What do you think of them, Aramis?"

"That they are our men."

"You are not mistaken. I certainly recognised M. de Flamarens."

"And I, M. de Châtillon."

"And the cavalier in the brown cloak"—

"It was the Cardinal."

"In person."

"How the devil do they dare thus to hazard themselves so near the Hôtel de Bouillon?" exclaimed Aramis.

Athos smiled, but said nothing; and five minutes after, they knocked at the Prince's door.

It was guarded by a sentinel, as is the custom with men of superior rank; and a small picket was established in the courtyard, ready to obey the behests of the Prince de Conti's lieutenant.

[1] "The brave Duc de Bouillon
Is laid up with the gout."

the ballad declared, the Duc de Bouillon had the gout, was in bed; but in spite of this serious indisposition, had prevented his mounting his horse for a month, — to say, since Paris had been in a state of siege, — he ot the less disposed to receive the Comte de la Fère and hevalier d'Herblay.

e two friends were therefore introduced into the Duc de on's room. The invalid was in bed, but surrounded by ost complete assortment of military ornaments that could bly be imagined. There was nothing on the walls but ds, pistols, cuirasses, and arquebusses; and it was evident as soon as he got rid of the gout, M. de Bouillon would the enemies of the Parliament a pretty skein of thread ravel. In the meantime, to his great regret as he said, vas obliged to keep his bed.

Ah, gentlemen," he exclaimed, on perceiving his two ors, and making such an effort to raise himself on his bed tracted from him a painful grimace, — "you are happy! can mount your horses, come and go, and fight for the e of the people. But I, as you may perceive, am nailed y bed. Ah, this infernal gout!" said he, making another ace, — "this infernal gout!"

Monseigneur," said Athos, "we are just returned from and, and our first step on reaching Paris has been to come inquire after your health."

Many thanks, gentlemen, many thanks!" replied the e; "my health is very bad, as you may see, — this in- l gout! Ah, you are just come from England? And Charles is well, so I have this minute heard?"

He is dead, monseigneur," said Aramis.

Bah!" said the astonished Duke.

Dead on the scaffold — condemned by the Parliament."

Impossible!"

And executed in our presence."

What was it, then, M. de Flamarens was telling me?"

M. de Flamarens!" said Aramis.

Yes; he has just left me."

thos smiled.

With two companions?" said Aramis.

Yes, with two companions," replied the Duke. Then he d, with some anxiety: "Can you have met them?"

Yes, in the street, we believe," said Athos.

And he looked with a smile at Aramis, who, on his side, regarded him with no slight astonishment.

"This infernal gout!" exclaimed M. de Bouillon, evidently ill at ease.

"Monseigneur," said Athos, "really it requires all your great devotion to the cause of Paris to remain, suffering as you are, the head of armies; and your perseverance excites the admiration of M. d'Herblay and myself."

"What would you have, gentlemen? It is absolutely necessary, and you are yourselves examples of it, — you, so brave and devoted, — you, to whom my dear colleague, the Duke de Beaufort, owes his liberty and perhaps his life, — it is absolutely necessary to sacrifice one's-self for the public good. Therefore, you see, I sacrifice myself; but I confess to you that my strength is exhausted. My heart is good, my head is clear, but this infernal gout is destroying me; and I confess that if the Court did justice to my demands — my just demands — all I ask is an indemnity promised by the old Cardinal when I was deprived of my principality of Sedan — yes, I confess if they gave me domains of equal value, if they indemnified me for the deprivation of this property since it was taken from me — that is to say, for eight years; if the title of prince accorded to those of my family; and my brother Turenne stated in his command, why, then I would immediately repair to my estates, and let the Court and Parliament settle affairs as they thought fit."

"And your Excellence would be quite right," replied Athos.

"It is your opinion, is it not, Monsieur le Comte de La Fère."

"Entirely so."

"And yours also, Chevalier d'Herblay?"

"Perfectly so."

"Well, then, I confess to you, gentlemen," resumed the Duke, "that in all probability it is that which I shall adopt. The Court is at present making overtures to me; and it only remains with me to accept them. Up to this time I have rejected them; but since such men as you say that I am wrong, and above all as this infernal gout renders it impossible for me to be of any service to the cause of the Parisians, upon faith! I have a great mind to follow your advice, and to accept the proposition that M. de Châtillon has just made me."

"Accept it, Prince, accept it," said Aramis.

"*Faith!* and I will, then. I am even sorry that I al-

t this evening. But there is a conference to-morrow,
ıall see."
'o friends bowed to the Duke.
;entlemen," said he, "go; you must be very much
with your journey. Poor King Charles! But, after
ıs somewhat at fault in the business; and what ought
: us is, that France has nothing to reproach herself
:he occasion, and that she did all she could to save

ıs to that," said Aramis, "we are witnesses to it —
azarin in particular!"
now, I am very glad that you bear him that testimony.
od at the core, that Cardinal; and if he were not a
— Ah, well, they will do him justice at last. Aïe!
nal gout!"
and Aramis left the room, but M. de Bouillon's cries
them even to the ante-chamber. It was evident that
Prince was suffering the tortures of the damned.
; reached the street door: "Well, now," said Aramis,
) you think?"
hat?"
. de Bouillon, pardieu?"
riend, I think what the triolet of our guide thinks,"
thos:

"'*Ce pauvre Duc de Bouillon*
Est incommodé de la goutte.'"

:fore," said Aramis, "I did not breathe a syllable to
e object that took us to his house."
you acted prudently; you would have brought on a
. Let us now go to M. le Beaufort."
e two friends proceeded towards the Hôtel de Ven-

·k ten o'clock just as they reached it.
ôtel de Vendôme was not less carefully guarded and
a no less warlike aspect than M. de Bouillon's.
re sentinels, a picket in the court, stacked arms, and
orses fastened to the rings. Two horsemen were com-
ıst as Athos and Aramis entered, so that the latter
ged to draw their horses back to let them pass.
gentlemen," said Aramis, "this is decidedly a night
ıgs; and I confess that we should be very unfortunate,

[illegible] not many [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] —[illegible]

[illegible] with Flamarens, [illegible]

[illegible] we meet [illegible]

[illegible] much more [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Aramis.

[illegible] the Duke.

[illegible] proceeded on their way, and [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the bridles of their horses over [illegible] themselves of [illegible] and after having [illegible] light of a lantern [illegible] an exclamation of [illegible] into their arms.

"[illegible]" he exclaimed; "Chevalier d'Herblay! How [illegible] in Paris?"

"[illegible]" said the two friends at the same time.

"[illegible] from Vendômois, as you know, [illegible] preparing to give some trouble to Mazarin. [illegible] party, I presume?"

"[illegible] And the Duke?"

"He [illegible] against Mazarin. You are aware of our dear Duke's [illegible] He is the real King of Paris; he cannot go out without being almost stifled."

"And so much the better," said Aramis. "But tell me, did not M. de Flamarens and M. de Châtilion just this moment go out?"

"Yes, they have just had an audience of the Duke. They come from Mazarin, no doubt; but they will have found whom they had to deal with, I'll answer for it."

"All in good time," said Athos. "But can one have the honour of an interview with his Highness?"

"Certainly, and this very instant, too; you know that he is always visible to you. Follow me; I claim the honour of presenting you."

Rochefort preceded them. All the doors opened before him and the two friends. They found M. de Beaufort just going to sit down at table. The thousand occupations of the evening had delayed his supper until that hour; but in spite of th

tance of the circumstance, the Prince no sooner heard
vo names announced by Rochefort than he arose from his
which he was just drawing to the table, and came
ly forward to meet the friends.
h, pardieu!" said he; "welcome, gentlemen! You are
to share in my supper, are you not? Boisjoli, inform
nont that I have two guests. You know Noirmont, do
not, gentlemen? He is my steward, the successor of
r Marteau, who manufactures excellent pies, as you
. Boisjoli, let him send one of his genuine ones, but not
kind that he made for La Ramée. Thank God! we do
ow want rope ladders, daggers, or choke-pears."
Monseigneur," said Athos, "do not, on our account, incon-
nce your illustrious steward, with whose numerous and
l talents we are well acquainted. This evening, with
Highness's permission, we will only have the honour of
ing after your health, and of taking your orders."
h, as to my health, you may see, gentlemen, it is excel-
The health that could withstand five years in the Bas-
besides M. de Chavigny, is able to bear everything. As
y orders, faith, I confess that I should be much embar-
l to give you any, seeing that every one gives his own,
nat should this continue I shall end by giving none at all."
ndeed," said Athos; "but I thought that the Parliament
ded on your union."
h, yes! our union — it is a fine thing. With the Duc de
lon all goes on well as yet: he has the gout, does not
his bed, and one can manage to agree with him. But as
. d'Elbeuf and his elephants of sons — do you know the
on the Duke d'Elbeuf, gentlemen?"
o, monseigneur."
ndeed!"
e Duke began to sing:

[1] "'*Monsieur d'Elbeuf et ses enfants*
Font rage à la Place Royale,
Ils vont tous quatre piaffant,
Monsieur d'Elbeuf et ses enfants.

[1] "Monsieur d'Elbeuf and his big sons
In the Place Royale are mighty ones;
At home they fear nor guns nor daggers,
Well done, D'Elbeuf, and thy big braggers!
But when in the field the fighting comes,
Good-by to the courage of D'Elbeuf's sons.
Monsieur d'Elbeuf and his three big sons
In the Place Royale are mighty ones."

Mais sitôt qu'il faut battre aux champs
Adieu leur humeur martiale;
Monsieur d'Elbeuf et ses enfants
Font rage à la Place Royale.'"

"But," said Athos, "this is not also the case with the coadjutor, I hope?"

"Ah, well, yes! With the coadjutor it is even worse. God preserve you from quarrelsome prelates, especially when they carry a cuirass under their simar. Instead of keeping himself quiet in his palace to sing *Te Deums* for the victories that we do not gain, or for the victories where we are beaten, do you know what he does?"

"No."

"He raises a regiment to which he gives his name — the regiment of Corinth. He makes lieutenants and captains neither more nor less than a marshal of France, and colonels like the King."

"Yes," said Aramis; "but when there is any fighting, I hope he then keeps in his archiepiscopal palace?"

"Not at all. There you are mistaken, my dear D'Herblay. When there is any fighting, he fights; so that as the death of his uncle has given him a seat in Parliament, he is now perpetually on his legs, either in the Parliament, at the council, or in the combat. The Prince de Conti is general in appearance — but what an appearance! A hump-backed general! Ah! all this goes very badly, gentlemen, — all this goes very badly."

"So that your Highness is discontented?" said Athos, exchanging a look with Aramis.

"Discontented, Count? Say that my Highness is furious. So much so — I tell it to you, though I would not tell it to others — so much so that if the Queen would confess her faults toward me, if she would recall my mother from exile, and give me the reversion of the admiralty, which now belongs to my father and was promised me at his death, — well, then I should not be disinclined to train dogs whom I would teach to say that there *are* greater thieves in France than M. de Mazarin."

It was no longer merely a look, but a look and a smile, that Athos and Aramis exchanged; and even if they had not met *them, they* would have surmised that Flamarens and Châtillon

d been there also. Therefore they did not breathe a word M. de Mazarin's presence in Paris.

" Monseigneur," said Athos, " we are now quite satisfied. e had no other motive in coming here, at this time of night, an to show our devotion to your Highness, and to tell u that we are still at your service as your most faithful lowers."

" As my most faithful friends, gentlemen, — as my most thful friends. You have given me proof of it; and should ver be reconciled to the Court, I shall prove, I hope, that I o have remained your friend, as well as the friend of those ier gentlemen — what the devil do you call them ? — D'Ar- gnan and Porthos ? "

" D'Artagnan and Porthos."

" Ay, yes ! that is it. Therefore you understand, Comte de Fère, you understand, Chevalier d'Herblay, I am entirely l always yours."

Athos and Aramis bowed and left the room.

" My dear Athos," said Aramis, " I verily believe that you isented to accompany me, God forgive me ! only to give me esson."

" Wait now, my dear," said Athos; " it will be time for you discover this when we leave the coadjutor's house."

" Come along, then, to the archiepiscopal palace," said amis.

And they went towards the City.

On approaching the cradle of Paris, Athos and Aramis ind the streets inundated, and they were obliged again to ke a boat.

It was past eleven o'clock; but it was known that there was fixed hour for presenting one's-self before the coadjutor, his credible activity turning night into day, according to the igency of circumstances.

The archiepiscopal palace arose out of the bosom of the aters; and it might have been imagined, from the number of ats moored against the sides all round the palace, that one as not in Paris, but at Venice. These boats were plying ck and forth, crossing one another in all directions, burying emselves in the mazes of the streets of the city, or disap- aring in the direction of the Arsenal or the Quay Saint ictor, where they floated as on a lake. Some of these boats ere mute and mysterious; others noisy and brilliantly lighted.

The two friends glided along through this world of little vessels, and landed in their turn.

The entire ground floor of the palace was inundated; but stairs or ladders had been fitted to the walls, and the only change made by the inundation was that, instead of entering by the doors, they entered by the windows. So Athos and Aramis landed in the prelate's ante-room! This ante-room was filled with lacqueys, for a dozen gentlemen of rank were crowded into the waiting-room.

"Mon Dieu!" said Aramis; "look there, Athos! Can this fop of a coadjutor be going to give us the pleasure of kicking our heels in his ante-chamber?"

Athos smiled.

"My dear friend," said he, "you must take men with all the inconveniences of their position. The coadjutor is, at this moment, one of the seven or eight kings reigning in Paris. He has a court."

"Yes," said Aramis, "but we are not courtiers."

"So, then, let us send up our names; and if he should not, on hearing them, give us a proper answer, well, then we will leave him to the affairs of France and his own. All we have to do is to find a lacquey and put a demi-pistole into his hand."

"Well, really," exclaimed Aramis, "I am not mistaken! Yes — no — yes, it is Bazin! Come here, you rascal!"

Bazin, who, clothed in his ecclesiastical robes, was at that moment most majestically crossing the ante-room, turned round with a frown, to discover who was impertinent enough thus to apostrophise him. But scarcely had he recognised Aramis before the tiger became a lamb, and coming up to the two gentlemen:

"What!" said he; "is it really you, Monsieur le Chevalier? Is it you, Monsieur le Comte? Here you are, at the very moment that we were so uneasy about you. Oh, how happy I am to see you again!"

"Very well, very well, Master Bazin," said Aramis; "but a truce with compliments. We are come to see the coadjutor: but we are in haste and must see him immediately."

"Certainly — this instant," said Bazin; "gentlemen like you must not be kept waiting in ante-rooms. Only, at this precise moment he is in secret conference with one M. de *Bruy.*"

"De Bruy!" exclaimed both Athos and Aramis.

"Yes, I announced him myself, and perfectly remember his name. Do you know him, sir?" added Bazin, addressing Aramis.

"I fancy that I know him."

"I cannot say the same myself," replied Bazin; "for he was so closely muffled up in his cloak that, do all I could, I was not able to see the smallest bit of his face. But I will go and announce you; and then, perhaps, I may be more fortunate."

"It is quite useless," said Aramis: "we abandon the idea of seeing the coadjutor this evening; do we not, Athos?"

"As you please," answered the Count.

"Yes; he has affairs of too great importance to discuss with this M. de Bruy."

"And shall I inform him that you gentlemen came to the palace?"

"No, it is not worth the trouble," said Aramis. "Come, Athos."

And the two friends, making their way through the crowd of lacqueys, left the archiepiscopal abode, followed by Bazin, who testified to their importance by the profusion of his bows.

"Well, now," demanded Athos, when they were again in the boat, "do you not begin to think, my friend, that we should have only played these gentry a scurvy trick, had we arrested M. de Mazarin?"

"You are wisdom personified, Athos," replied Aramis.

What had more especially struck the two friends was the slight importance attributed by the Court of France to the terrible events that had happened in England, and that seemed to them as if they ought to engage the attention of all Europe.

In fact, except the poor widow and the royal orphan, who were weeping in a corner of the Louvre, no one seemed to know that King Charles I. had ever existed, or that this King had just perished on the scaffold.

The two friends made an appointment to meet at ten o'clock in the morning; for, although the night was far advanced when they reached the door of the hôtel, Aramis pretended that he had yet several visits of importance to pay, and allowed Athos to enter alone.

The next morning as it was striking ten they again met. Since six o'clock in the morning Athos had himself been out.

"Well, have you any news?" he asked.

"None whatever. D'Artagnan has not been seen anywhere, and Porthos has not yet made his appearance. And on your side?"

"Nothing."

"The devil!" said Aramis.

"In fact," said Athos, "this delay is not natural. They took the most direct road, and consequently ought to have arrived before us."

"Add, also," said Aramis, "that we know how quickly D'Artagnan moves, and that he is not the man to have lost an hour, knowing that we were waiting for him."

"He calculated, if you remember, on being here by the fifth."

"And here it is the ninth. This evening ends the period fixed for waiting."

"What do you think of doing," inquired Athos, "if we have no news of them this evening?"

"Set to work searching for them, to be sure."

"Good!" said Athos.

"But Raoul?" demanded Aramis.

A slight cloud passed over the Count's brow.

"Raoul gives me a good deal of anxiety," said he. "Yesterday he received a message from the Prince de Condé; he went to join him at St. Cloud, and is not returned."

"Have you not seen Madame de Chevreuse?"

"She was not at home. And you, Aramis, — you went, I suppose, to Madame de Longueville's?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well?"

"She was not at home either; but she had left the address of her new abode."

"And where was she?"

"Guess? I will give you a thousand times."

"How do you suppose I can guess where any one is at midnight? — for I presume that when you left me you went to her. How can you expect me to guess where the most beautiful and the most active of all the ladies of the Fronde is at midnight?"

"At the Hôtel de Ville, my dear."

"At the Hôtel de Ville! Why! Is she appointed provost of the merchants?"

"*No; but* she has been made provisional Queen of Paris:

and as she did not dare, just at first, to establish herself at the Palais Royal or at the Tuileries, she installed herself in the Hôtel de Ville, where she is on the point of presenting the dear Duke with an heir or an heiress."

"Why did you not tell me this before?" said Athos.

"Bah! It was sheer forgetfulness; excuse me."

"Now, what shall we do until the evening?" asked Athos. 'We really have nothing to do, it appears"

"You forget, my friend, that we have our work cut out for us."

"Where?"

"At Charenton, morbleu! I have hopes of meeting there, according to promise, a certain M. de Châtillon, whom I have a long time detested."

"What for?"

"Because he is the brother of a certain M. de Coligny."

"Ah, that is true; I had forgotten it! — he who presumed to the honour of being your rival. But he was cruelly punished for that audacity, my dear, and that ought to satisfy you."

"Yes, but what would you have? That does not satisfy me. I am rancorous; it is the sole point by which I hold my connection with the Church. But after all, you understand, Athos, there is no obligation on you to go with me."

"Come now," said Athos, "you are jesting."

"In that case, my dear, and if you are determined to go with me, there is no time to lose; the drum is beating. I met the cannon just setting off — I saw the citizens placing themselves in order of battle on the Place of the Hôtel de Ville; and there is certainly going to be an engagement in the direction of Charenton, as the Duke de Châtillon said yesterday."

"I should have thought," said Athos, "that last night's conferences would have made some alterations in these warlike preparations."

"Yes, without doubt; but they will fight nevertheless, were it only more completely to mask these conferences."

"Poor people!" said Athos; "they go to get themselves killed that M. de Bouillon may obtain possession of Sedan, that M. de Beaufort may procure the reversion of the admiralty, and that the coadjutor may become a cardinal."

"Come, come, my dear," said Aramis, "confess that you

would not be philosophical were not your Raoul mixed up with all this squabble."

"Perhaps you say the truth, Aramis."

"Well, then, let us go where there is fighting; it is a sure method of finding D'Artagnan, Porthos, and perhaps Raoul."

"Alas!" said Athos.

"My good friend," said Aramis, "now that we are in Paris, believe me, you should lose that habit of constantly sighing. Morbleu! in war times let it be war times, Athos. Do you no longer wear a sword, and have you become a Churchman? There, look at those handsome citizens going by; it is quite charming, tudieu! And that captain, do you see?—he really has almost a military gait."

"They are coming out of the Rue du Mouton."

"With drums at their head, like real soldiers. But just look at that rogue: how straight he carries himself—how he struts!"

"Heu!" said Grimaud.

"What?" asked Athos.

"Planchet, sir."

"Lieutenant yesterday," said Aramis, "captain to-day, colonel to-morrow without doubt; in a week the rogue will be a marshal of France."

"Let us get some news from him," said Athos.

And the two friends went up to Planchet, who, prouder than ever to be seen on duty, deigned to explain to the two gentlemen that he had received orders to take up a position on the Place Royale, with two hundred men, forming the rear guard of the Parisian army, and to march on Charenton when he was wanted.

As Athos and Aramis were going in the same direction, they escorted Planchet to his post.

Planchet made his men manœuvre skilfully enough on the Place Royale, and drew them up in the rear of a long line of citizens, who were placed in the Rue and Faubourg de St. Antoine, waiting for the signal of battle.

"The day will be a hot one," said Planchet, in his most warlike tone.

"Yes, no doubt," said Aramis; "but the enemy are a long way off."

"We shall soon shorten the distance," said a leader of ten men.

Aramis bowed. Then addressing Athos:

"I do not much like encamping in the Place Royale with all these gentry," said he. "Shall we go forward? We shall see things better."

"And, besides, M. de Châtillon will not come to look for you in the Place Royale — is not that so? Come, then, let us go forward, my friend."

"Have you not two words to say on your own part to M. de Flamarens?"

"My friend," replied Athos, "I have formed a resolution never to draw my sword again unless I am absolutely compelled to do so."

"And how long is it since you formed this resolution?"

"Since I drew my dagger."

"Ah, good! Another memorial of M. Mordaunt. Well, my dear, only one thing more is wanting, which is, to feel remorse for having slain him!"

"Hush!" said Athos, putting his finger on his lips with that melancholy smile peculiar to himself; "let us not talk any more of Mordaunt — it will bring us misfortune."

And Athos pushed forward towards Charenton, skirting the faubourg, then the valley of Fécamp, all black with armed citizens.

It is superfluous to say that Aramis followed him, half a horse's length behind.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE COMBAT OF CHARENTON.

As Athos and Aramis passed the different corps drawn up on the road, they saw burnished and glittering cuirasses beginning to take the place of rusty arms, and bright muskets the motley array of halberds.

"I fancy that this is the real battle-field," said Aramis. "Do you see that body of cavalry that is drawn up in front of the bridge, with pistol in hand? Ah! take care — here comes the artillery."

"Ah ça, my dear," said Athos, "where have you brought us? It seems to me that I can see, all round us, faces of men

belonging to the Royal Army. Is not that M. de Châtillon himself coming forward, with his two brigadiers?"

And Athos drew his sword; while Aramis, thinking that he had gone beyond the limits of the Parisian camp, put his hand to his holster.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said the Duke, coming up; "I perceive that you do not understand what is going on; but one word will explain it all: we are having a truce for the moment; there is a conference. The Prince, M. de Retz, M. de Beaufort, and M. de Bouillon are now talking politics. Now, two different circumstances will bring the same result: either affairs will not be arranged, and we shall meet, Chevalier; or they will be arranged, and, as I shall then be relieved from my command, we shall still meet."

"Sir," said Aramis, "you speak wonderfully well. Allow me, then, to ask you one question?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Where are the plenipotentiaries?"

"At Charenton, in the second house on the right as you enter from Paris."

"And was not this conference foreseen?"

"No, gentlemen. It seems it is the result of new propositions that M. de Mazarin made the Parisians last evening."

Athos and Aramis looked at each other and laughed. They knew better than any one else what these propositions were, to whom they had been made, and who had made them.

"And the house where the plenipotentiaries are," demanded Athos, "belongs to" —

"M. de Chanleu, who commands your troops at Charenton. I say your troops, because I presume that you gentlemen are Frondeurs."

"Why, pretty nearly so," said Aramis.

"What do you mean! Pretty nearly so?"

"Certainly, sir. You know better than any one else that in these times it is impossible to tell exactly what one is."

"We are for the King and the princes," said Athos.

"Now we must understand each other," said Châtillon: "the King is with us, and he has for his commanders-in-chief M. d'Orléans and M. de Condé."

"Yes," said Athos, "but his place is in our ranks, with M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, M. d'Elbeuf, and M. de Bouillon."

"*That* may be," replied Châtillon; "and it is very well

known I have but slight sympathy for M. de Mazarin. My interests, also, are all in Paris; I am there engaged in a great lawsuit on which depends all my fortune; and only just now I have been to consult my lawyer."

"At Paris?"

"No, at Charenton: M. Viole, whom you must know by name, — an excellent man, only a little headstrong; but he is not in the Parliament for nothing. I calculated on seeing him yesterday evening; but our meeting prevented my occupying myself with my own affairs. However, as business must be attended to, I took advantage of the truce; and that is the reason why I am now in the midst of you."

"Does M. Viole give his consultations in the open air?" asked Aramis, laughing.

"Yes, sir, and even on horseback. He commands five hundred good pistol-shots to-day; and I paid him a visit, accompanied, to do him honour, by these two small pieces of cannon, at the head of which you appeared so astonished to see me. I confess that I did not know him at first: he has a long sword over his robe and pistols at his belt; this gives him a formidable air that would quite delight you, if you had the good fortune to meet him."

"If he is such a curious sight, it would be worth while to look for him," said Aramis.

"Then you must make haste, sir, for the conferences cannot last much longer."

"And should they be broken off without producing any result," said Athos, "are you going to endeavour to take Charenton?"

"Those are my orders. I command the attacking troops, and will do my best to succeed."

"Sir," said Athos, "since you command the cavalry" —

"Pardon me. I am Commander-in-Chief."

"Still better. You must know all the officers — I mean all those who are at all distinguished."

"Yes, pretty nearly so."

"Would you, then, be good enough to tell me if you have not under your orders the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a lieutenant of Musketeers?"

"No, sir, he is not with us. He left Paris six weeks ago, and is said to have gone on a mission to England."

"I know that, but supposed he was returned."

"No, sir, and I do not know that any one has seen him; I can answer you the better on this subject, because the Musketeers are with us, and M. de Cambon, in the meantime, is taking M. d'Artagnan's place."

The two friends looked at each other.

"You see," said Athos.

"It is strange," said Aramis.

"Some misfortune must positively have happened to them on the road."

"To-day is the eighth, and the term appointed expires this evening. Should we receive no intelligence of them to-night, we will depart to-morrow morning."

Athos gave a nod of assent. Then turning round:

"And M. de Bragelonne, a young man of fifteen years of age, attached to the Prince," asked Athos, somewhat confused at thus displaying his paternal anxiety before the sceptical Aramis, "has he the honour of being known to you, Monsieur le Duc?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Châtillon; "he came here this morning with the Prince. He is a charming young man! Is he one of your friends, Count?"

"Yes, sir," replied Athos, slightly agitated, "so much so that I greatly wish to see him. Is it possible?"

"Quite possible, sir. If you will accompany me, I will conduct you to headquarters."

"Holà!" said Aramis, turning round; "there is a great noise behind us, it seems to me."

"'T is true; a body of horsemen is coming toward us," said Châtillon.

"I recognise the coadjutor by his Fronde hat."

"And I, M. de Beaufort by his white plumes."

"They are coming on at a gallop. The Prince is with them. Ah! there he leaves them."

"They are beating the recall!" exclaimed Châtillon. "Do you hear? We must gain some information."

In fact, the soldiers were seen running to their arms, the horsemen who had dismounted were springing into their saddles, the trumpets were sounding, the drums were beating. M. de Beaufort drew his sword.

On his side, the Prince also gave the signal of recall, and all the officers of the Royal army, who had for a short time *been mingling* with the Parisian troops, hastened to him.

"Gentlemen," said Châtillon, "the truce is evidently broken, nd we are going to fight. Return to Charenton, for I shall hortly attack it. Observe the signal that the Prince gives ie."

In fact, a cornet thrice raised the Prince's standard in the air.

"Au revoir, Chevalier," exclaimed Châtillon, and he set off t full gallop to rejoin his escort.

Athos and Aramis turned their horses' heads and went to alute the coadjutor and M. de Beaufort. M. de Bouillon had ad such a terrible fit of the gout toward the end of the con-erence that they were obliged to carry him back to Paris in litter.

As some compensation the Duc d'Elbeuf, surrounded by his our sons as by his staff, was hastily inspecting the ranks of ie Parisian army.

In the meantime between Charenton and the Royal army a arge open space was formed, which seemed to be prepared to erve as the last receptacle for the dead bodies.

"This Mazarin is really a disgrace to France!" said the oadjutor, tightening his sword-belt, which he wore, after the ashion of the ancient military prelates, over his archiepiscopal mar; "he is a stingy rascal, who would manage France like farm. Therefore France cannot hope for peace and happi-ess until he shall have left it."

"It seems that they have not agreed on the colour of his at," said Aramis.

At the same moment M. de Beaufort raised his sword.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have been making fruitless fforts to negotiate. We wished to relieve ourselves of that ontemptible Mazarini; but the Queen, who is infatuated by im, insists on keeping him as her Minister; so that there emains but one expedient for us, which is, to fight con-ressly."

"Good!" said the coadjutor. "Here we have M. de Beau-ort's usual eloquence."

"Happily," said Aramis, "he corrects the faults of his lan-uage by the point of his sword."

"Faugh!" said the coadjutor contemptuously; "I can ssure you that he is but a poor thing in this war."

And he drew his sword in turn.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the enemy approaches; we shall do ell, I think, to spare him half the journey."

And, without disturbing himself as to whether he was followed or not, off he went. His regiment, which bore the name of the Regiment of Corinth, being the title of his archbishopric, set off after him and began the skirmish.

M. de Beaufort launched his cavalry, under the command of M. de Noirmoutiers, toward Étampes, where he was to meet a convoy of provisions anxiously expected by the Parisians. M. de Beaufort prepared to support him.

M. de Chanleu, who commanded the place, kept himself, with the strongest body of his troops, ready to resist the assault, and even to attempt a sortie in case the enemy were repulsed.

In about half an hour the combat had begun at every point.

The coadjutor, exasperated by M. de Beaufort's reputation for courage, dashed forward, and was performing prodigies of valour. His vocation was the sword, you know, and he was happy whenever he had an opportunity of drawing it from the scabbard, no matter for whom or for what. But in the present case, if he did his duty well as a soldier he performed it badly as a colonel. With seven or eight hundred men he had attacked three thousand; who, in turn, had moved forward in one mass with such a shock that they drove back the coadjutor's soldiers to the ramparts in complete disorder. But the fire of Chanleu's artillery had checked the Royal army, which appeared shaken for an instant; but that lasted only a short time, and they re-formed behind a group of houses and a small wood.

Chanleu fancied that the time was now come; he pushed forward, at the head of two regiments, to follow the Royal army; but, as we have said, it had re-formed, and was coming back to the charge, led by M de Châtillon in person. The charge was so severe, and so skilfully managed, that Chanleu and his men found themselves almost surrounded. Chanleu commanded a retreat, which he began to execute foot by foot, step by step; but unfortunately, in a moment, Chanleu himself fell, mortally wounded.

M. de Châtillon saw him fall, and announced his death in a loud voice, which redoubled the courage of the Royal army, and completely demoralized the two regiments with which Chanleu had made the sortie. In consequence, each man thought of his own safety, and only occupied himself with the care of regaining the ramparts, at the foot of which the coadjutor was trying to rally his shattered regiment.

Suddenly a squadron of cavalry rushed forward to meet the conquerors, who were coming pellmell with the fugitives into the entrenchments. Athos and Aramis charged at their head — Aramis with sword and pistol in his hand, Athos with his sword in the scabbard and his pistols in their holsters. Athos was as calm and cool as on parade, except that his handsome and noble countenance was saddened when he saw so many men cutting one another's throats, and sacrificing themselves on the one side to the obstinacy of the Court, and on the other to the rancour of the princes. Aramis, on the contrary, revelled in the slaughter, as usual with him. His eyes were like flames; his mouth, so finely shaped, wore a deadly smile; his inflated nostrils inhaled the odour of blood; every one of his sword-cuts was given with deadly correctness; and the butt end of his pistol finished the wounded who endeavoured to rise again.

On the opposite side and in the ranks of the Royal army, two horsemen, one covered by a gilded cuirass, the other by a plain buff-coat from which issued the sleeves of a blue velvet doublet, were charging in the front rank. The Chevalier in the gilded cuirass rushed to meet Aramis, and aimed at him a sword thrust, which he parried with his usual skill.

"Ah! is it you, M. de Châtillon?" exclaimed the Chevalier. "Welcome! I was expecting you."

"I hope that I have not made you wait too long, sir," replied the Duke. "At any rate, here I am."

"Monsieur de Châtillon," said Aramis, drawing from his holster a pistol which he had reserved for this occasion, "if your pistol be discharged, I think you are a dead man."

"Thank God, it is not, sir," said Châtillon.

And the Duke, levelling his pistol at Aramis, aimed and fired. But Aramis stooped his head just as he saw the Duke apply his finger to the trigger, and the ball passed over his head without touching him.

"Oh! you have missed me!" said Aramis; "but I swear by God that I will not miss you."

"If I give you time!" cried M. de Châtillon, spurring his horse and bounding on him, with his sword raised on high.

Aramis waited for him with that terrible smile that was characteristic of him on such an occasion; and Athos, who saw M. de Châtillon coming against Aramis with the rapidity of lightning, opened his mouth to cry, "Fire! Fire now!" when

the shot was fired. M. de Châtillon threw out his arms and fell back on his horse's crupper.

The ball had entered his breast by the hollow of the cuirass.

"I am a dead man!" murmured the Duke.

And he fell from his horse to the earth.

"I told you so, sir, and I am now sorry that I kept my word so well. Can I be of any service to you?"

Châtillon made a sign with his hand, and Aramis was about to dismount, when he suddenly received a violent blow in the side from a sword, but his cuirass parried the blow.

He turned quickly and seized this fresh antagonist by the wrist, when two cries were uttered at the same instant, one by himself, the other by Athos.

"Raoul!"

The young man at the same moment recognised the countenance of Chevalier d'Herblay's face and his father's voice, and dropped his sword. Many of the Parisian horsemen then rushed on Raoul, but Aramis covered him with his sword.

"My prisoner!" he exclaimed. "Give way!"

Athos then took his son's horse by the bridle and led him out of the fray.

At this moment M. le Prince, who was supporting M. de Châtillon in the second line, appeared in the midst of the skirmish; his eagle eyes were seen to sparkle, and he was recognised by his blows.

On perceiving him the regiment of the Archbishop of Corinth, which the coadjutor had been vainly endeavouring to rally, threw itself into the midst of the Parisian troops, overthrew everything in its way, and fled into Charenton, through which it passed without stopping. The coadjutor, carried away by it, passed near the group formed by Athos, Aramis, and Raoul.

"Aha!" cried Aramis, who, from his jealousy, could not help rejoicing in the check the coadjutor had received, — "in your character of archbishop, your Excellence ought to know the Scriptures."

"And what have the Scriptures to do with what is now taking place?" asked the coadjutor.

"That the Prince treats you to-day as St. Paul did — see First Corinthians."

"Come, come!" said Athos, "that is a clever jest; but we *must not* wait here bandying compliments. Forward, forward!

Or, rather, retreat; for the battle seems to be lost to the Frondeurs."

"It is all the same to me," replied Aramis. "All I came here for was to meet M. de Châtillon. I have met him; and I am satisfied. A duel with a Châtillon is rather flattering."

"And a prisoner to boot!" said Athos, pointing to Raoul.

The three cavaliers continued their course at a gallop.

The young man had experienced a thrill of joy on meeting his father. They galloped side by side, the young man's left hand being in Athos's right.

When they were some distance from the battle-field:

"What were you going to do, so forward in the skirmish, my dear?" said Athos to the young man; "that was not your proper place, I think, not being suitably armed for the combat."

"But then I was not to fight to-day, sir. I had received a commission from the Prince to the Cardinal, and was just setting off for Rueil, when, seeing M. de Châtillon charge, I was seized with a longing to charge by his side. He then told me that two gentlemen of the Parisian army were looking for me, and he mentioned the Comte de la Fère."

"What! You knew that we were there, and yet wished to kill your friend, the Chevalier?"

"I did not recognise the Chevalier under his armour," said Raoul, colouring; "although I ought to have done so by his address and coolness."

"Thank you for the compliment, my young friend; it is evident that you have received good lessons in courtesy. But you were going to Rueil, you said?"

"Yes."

"To the Cardinal?"

"Certainly. I am the bearer of a despatch from the Prince to his Eminence."

"You must take it there," said Athos.

"Oh! as regards that, one moment, if you please. No false generosity, Count. What the devil! Our own fate and, what is more important, the fate of our friends, perhaps, depends on that despatch."

"But this young man must not fail in his duty," replied Athos.

"In the first place, you forget, Count, that the young man is a prisoner. What we do, therefore, is perfectly fair. Besides,

the conquerors must not be too fastidious in their use of means. Give me the despatch, Raoul."

Raoul hesitated, at the same time looking at Athos as if to seek for a rule of action in his eyes.

"Give up the despatch," said Athos; "you are the Chevalier d'Herblay's prisoner."

Raoul yielded with reluctance; but Aramis, less scrupulous than the Comte de la Fère, seized the despatch with eagerness, ran it over, and then gave it to Athos.

"You who are a believer," said he, "read this letter, and, on reflection, you will perceive something in it that Providence deems important for us to know."

Athos took the letter with a frown; but the idea that it had something to do with D'Artagnan aided in conquering the repugnance he had to read it. The letter was as follows:

"*Your Excellence:*

"*I will this evening send to your Eminence the ten men that you asked for, to reinforce M. de Comminges's troop. They are good soldiers, fit to restrain the two rough adversaries whose address and resolution your Eminence fears.*"

"Oho!" said Athos.

"Well, now," demanded Aramis, "what do you think of the two adversaries, to guard whom ten good soldiers are necessary, independent of Comminges's troop? Does not this seem like two drops of water to D'Artagnan and Porthos?"

"We will ransack Paris all to-day," said Athos; "and should we get no news this evening, we will take the road to Picardy; and I will answer for it, thanks to D'Artagnan's imagination, that we shall not be long before we discover some indication that will relieve our doubts."

"Let us ransack Paris, then, and inquire of Planchet, especially, whether he has not heard something of his old master."

"Ah, poor Planchet! You talk of him very easily, Aramis. He has doubtless been massacred. All those warlike citizens must have gone out, and have no doubt been killed."

As this was probable enough, the two friends with some anxiety entered Paris by the Porte du Temple and went to the Place Royale, where they thought they might hear something of these poor citizens. But great was the astonishment of the two friends to find them and their captain still encamped

the Place Royale, drinking and joking, while they were ıbtless lamented by their families, who had heard the report the cannon at Charenton, and believed them to be in the lst of the battle.

Athos and Aramis made further inquiries of Planchet, but had heard nothing of D'Artagnan. They wished to take a with them; but he informed them that he could not leave post without superior orders.

At five o'clock these citizens returned to their homes, declar- that they had just come from the battle. They had never t sight of the bronze horse of Louis XIII.!

'A thousand thunders!" said Planchet, on entering his shop the Rue des Lombards; "we have been utterly routed! I ıll never console myself for it!"

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE ROAD TO PICARDY.

Athos and Aramis, who were perfectly safe in Paris, did hide from themselves that as soon as they set their foot ond it they would be in the midst of the greatest dangers. t we know what these men thought of danger. Besides, y saw that the catastrophe of this second Odyssey was proaching, and that there was only one more tug to be le, as the saying goes.

Then, again, Paris itself was by no means calm. Provisions re beginning to fail; and whenever any one of the Prince Conti's generals wanted to regain his influence, he excited a ght insurrection which he quelled himself, and thus for the ment secured some superiority over his colleagues.

In one of these commotions M. de Beaumont caused Maza- 's house and library to be pillaged, to give, as he said, the r people something to gnaw.

Athos and Aramis left Paris just after this stroke of State icy, which took place during the evening of the day when Parisians were beaten at Charenton.

They left Paris wretched enough, bordering on a famine, tated by fears, torn by factions. As they were Parisians l Frondeurs, they expected to find the same misery, the same

fears, and the same intrigues in the enemy's camp. So their surprise was great when, on passing through St. Denis, they learned that at St. Germain there was laughing, singing, and a joyous life.

At first the two gentlemen took the by-roads, that they might not fall into the hands of the Mazarinists scattered about on the Isle of France; and afterwards to escape the Frondeurs, who had possession of Normandy, and who would not have failed to take them to M. de Longueville, that he might determine whether they were friends or foes. Having once got clear of these two dangers, they returned to the Boulogne road at Abbeville and followed it step by step.

Nevertheless, they were for some time in a state of uncertainty. They had questioned three or four innkeepers without making one single discovery to clear away their doubts, or to guide their researches; when, at Montreuil, Athos felt something rough on the table. He lifted the cloth and read these hieroglyphics deeply cut into the wood with the point of a knife:

"*Port — D'Art — 2d February.*"

"First rate!" exclaimed Athos, pointing out the inscription to Aramis. "We were going to sleep here, but it is useless. Let us go farther."

They again mounted their horses, and reached Abbeville. There they stopped in great perplexity, on account of the number of taverns. They could not visit them all; and how could they divine in which those they sought had lodged?

"Believe me, Athos," said Aramis, "we must not think of finding anything at Abbeville. If we are puzzled, our friends would not be less so. If Porthos had been alone, he would have gone to the most splendid hotel; and by having that pointed out to us, we should be sure of finding some traces of him. But D'Artagnan has no such weakness, and Porthos might in vain protest that he was dying of hunger. He doubtless continued his route, inexorable as Fate, and we must look farther on."

So they went on their way, but nothing presented itself. This was one of the most painful, as well as most tiresome, tasks that Athos and Aramis had ever undertaken; and had it not been for the threefold motive of honour, gratitude, and *friendship* set deep in their souls, our two friends would have

housand times given up in despair this searching the sand, estioning passers-by, studying signs, and examining counte-nces.

In this manner they went even to Péronne.

Athos was beginning to despair. His noble, sensitive dispo-ion made him take all the blame for the doubt in which he d Aramis found themselves. They had performed their arch unskilfully of course, they had not been sufficiently plicit in their questions, or persevering enough in their in-stigations. They were very near retracing their steps, when, crossing the faubourg that led to the gates of the city, on a ite wall that formed the angle of a street skirting the ram-rt, Athos caught sight of a sketch in black, which repre-nted, with the simplicity of a child's first effort, two horsemen lloping wildly; one of them held in his hand a scroll, on ich was written, in Spanish, these words:

"*We are pursued.*"

"Oho!" said Athos, "this is as clear as the day. Although rsued, D'Artagnan must have stopped here for five minutes. is proves that he was not very closely pursued; perhaps he naged to escape."

Aramis shook his head.

"If he had escaped," said he, "we should have seen him, or least we should have heard of him."

"You are right, Aramis; let us proceed."

To depict the anxiety and impatience of the two gentlemen uld be impossible. The anxiety rested on Athos's tender d friendly heart; the impatience belonged to Aramis's ner-us and excitable disposition. So, for three or four hours, they lloped on as wildly as the two horsemen on the wall. Sud-nly, in a narrow gorge enclosed between two banks, they w the road partially blocked up by an enormous bowlder. s original situation was indicated on the side of one of the nks, and the kind of bed that it had left by its extraction oved that it had not rolled down without aid; while its ight indicated that it must have required the arm of an celadus or a Briareus to move it.

Aramis stopped.

"Oh!" said he, looking at the bowlder, "there is something that that tells either of Ajax, the son of Telamon, or of

Porthos. Let us dismount, if you please, Count, and examine this rock."

They both dismounted. The stone had been evidently brought there to interrupt the passage of horsemen. It had, therefore, been at first placed across the road; then the horsemen had found this obstacle, had dismounted, and removed it.

The two friends examined the bowlder on all the exposed sides, but found nothing particular. They then summoned Blaisois and Grimaud, and all four managed to turn the bowlder over, and on the side that touched the earth was written:

"Eight Light Dragoons are following us. Should we reach Compiègne, we shall stop at the *Paon-Couronné;*[1] the landlord is a friend."

"Here is something positive," said Athos; "and in either case, we know what to do. So let us go to the *Paon-Couronné.*"

"Yes," replied Aramis; "but if we wish to reach it, we must give our horses some rest; they are almost foundered."

Aramis was right. They stopped at the first tavern, and had each horse given a double portion of oats steeped in wine. They also gave them three hours' rest, and then renewed their journey. The men themselves were worn out with fatigue, but hope sustained them.

Six hours later they made their way into Compiègne, and inquired for the *Paon-Couronné.* A sign, representing the god Pan with a crown on his head, was pointed out to them.

The two friends dismounted without taking any notice of the sign, which, at any other time, Aramis would have severely criticised. They found the landlord, who was a fine fellow, bald and portly as a Chinese mandarin, and asked him whether he had not been lodging two gentlemen pursued by some Light Dragoons. The landlord, without answering a word, went and took out of a trunk the half of a rapier blade.

"Do you know that?" said he.

Athos merely cast a glance at this blade.

"It is D'Artagnan's sword," said he.

"The short or the tall man's?" asked the host.

"The short one," replied Athos.

"I see that you are friends of these gentlemen."

"Well, what has happened to them?"

[1] The Crowned Peacock. Paon is pronounced like Pan.

"They came into my courtyard with horses foundered, and before they had time to shut the gate eight Light Dragoons, who were pursuing them, followed them in."

"Eight!" exclaimed Aramis. "It astonishes me that D'Artagnan and Porthos, two such valiant men, should allow themselves to be taken by eight men."

"No doubt, sir; and those eight men would not have managed it, if they had not been reinforced by some twenty men from the Royal Italian regiment, which is in garrison in this town; so that your two friends were, literally, overwhelmed by numbers."

"Arrested?" said Athos; "and is it known why?"

"No, sir; they were taken away immediately, and they had not time to tell me anything. Only, when they were gone I found this fragment of a sword on the field of battle, while I was helping to pick up two dead men and five or six wounded."

"And were they not hurt?" asked Aramis.

"No, sir; I believe not."

"There!" said Aramis, "that is some comfort."

"And do you know where they were taken?" inquired Athos.

"Toward Louvres."

"Let us leave Blaisois and Grimaud here," said Athos; "to-morrow they will return to Paris with the horses, which would break down if we rode them farther to-day, and we will take post."

"Yes, let us take post," said Aramis.

Fresh horses were sent for, and in the meantime the two friends made a hasty dinner. They wished to continue their journey, if they could find any news at Louvres.

On reaching Louvres they found there was only one inn there. Here they drank a liqueur which has retained its celebrity even to our days, and which was manufactured there even at that period.

"Let us dismount here," said Athos. "D'Artagnan will not have lost such an opportunity as this, not only to drink the liqueur, but to leave some trace for us."

They entered, and asked for two glasses of the liqueur at the counter, as D'Artagnan and Porthos might have done. The counter at which it was customary to drink was covered by a pewter; on this plate was scratched with the point of a coarse pin — "Rueil, D."

"They are at Rueil," said Aramis, whose attention this inscription first attracted.

"Let us go back to Rueil, then," said Athos.

"It is to cast ourselves into the jaws of the wolf," said Aramis.

"Had I been Jonah's friend as I am D'Artagnan's," said Athos, "I would have followed him even into the whale's belly; and you would have done the same thing, Aramis."

"Positively, my dear Count, I believe that you make me better than I am. If I were alone, I do not know whether I should go to Rueil without taking great precautions. But where you go I go."

They took horses and set off for Rueil.

Athos, without suspecting it, had given the very best advice to Aramis that could be followed. The parliamentary deputies had just reached Rueil for those famous conferences which lasted three weeks, and produced that lame peace at the termination of which M. le Prince was arrested. Rueil was crowded with advocates, presidents, counsellors, and lawyers of every description from the Parisians; and with gentlemen, officers, and guards from the Court. So it was very easy, in the midst of such confusion, to remain as unknown as any one might wish to be. Besides, the conferences had brought about a truce; and to arrest two gentlemen at such a moment, even were they Frondeurs of the highest grade, would have been an invasion of the rights of the people.

The two friends imagined that every one must be occupied by the thought that tormented them. They mingled in the groups, in the hope of hearing something said about D'Artagnan and Porthos; but every one was thinking only of the Articles, and their amendments. Athos suggested the propriety of going direct to the Minister.

"My friend," objected Aramis, "what you say is all very excellent. But we must be careful; our safety depends on our obscurity. If we make ourselves known in any way, we shall immediately be sent to join our friends in some deep dungeon, whence Satan himself could not get us out. So let us try to find them, not by accident, but according to our own cleverness. Arrested at Compiègne, they were brought to Rueil, as we were assured at Louvres; having been brought to Rueil, they were examined by the Cardinal, who, after this examination, has either kept them near him or sent them to Saint

Germain. They are not at the Bastille, for the Bastille is in the hands of the Frondeurs, and Broussel's son has the command of it. They are not dead, for D'Artagnan's death would have caused a great sensation. And Porthos I believe to be as immortal as God, though less patient. Let us not despond, then; let us remain at Rueil; for my conviction is that they are at Rueil. But what is the matter with you? You look pale!"

"Why," said Athos, in a voice that almost trembled, "I remember that Richelieu built a horrible *oubliette!*"

"Oh! do not distress yourself about that," said Aramis. "Richelieu was a gentleman, our equal by birth, our superior by his position. He could, like a king, touch the greatest of us on the head, and, by his touch, make our heads shake on our shoulders. But M. de Mazarin is a pitiful coward, who, at the best, can only take you by the collar like a bailiff. Cheer up, then, my friend! I still maintain that D'Artagnan and Porthos are at Rueil, living, and living well too."

"Never mind," said Athos; "we must obtain from the coadjutor the privilege of being at the conferences, and thus we can enter Rueil."

"With all those horrible lawyers? Can you think of it, my friend? And can you imagine that there will be the least discussion about the liberty or imprisonment of D'Artagnan and Porthos? No; I am of opinion that we should find some other method."

"Well, then," said Athos, "I return to my first idea: I know no better way than to act candidly and loyally. I will go, not to Mazarin, but to the Queen; and I will say to her: 'Restore us your two servants and our two friends!'"

Aramis shook his head.

"It is a last resource, of which you will be always at liberty to avail yourself, Athos; but do not use it, I beg of you, until the last extremity. It will be time enough to come to that. In the meantime, let us continue our search."

So they continued their search, and made so many men talk under a thousand pretexts, each more ingenious than the other, that at length they found a Light Dragoon, who confessed that he was one of the escort that brought D'Artagnan and Porthos from Compiègne to Rueil. Had it not been for the Light Dragoons, it would not have been known that they had entered Rueil.

Athos was constantly reverting to his idea of se Queen.

"To see the Queen," said Aramis, "it would first b sary to see the Cardinal. And hardly shall we have Cardinal — remember what I say, Athos — before we united to our friends, but not in the manner that we Now I confess that this mode of being united to the not much please me. Therefore let us act in freedom, may act well and rapidly."

"I shall see the Queen," replied Athos.

"Well, then, my friend, if you are resolved to foolish thing, tell me, I pray you, one day before yo the attempt."

"And why so?"

"Because I shall take advantage of it to go and pay at Paris."

"To whom?"

"Forsooth! I know not; perhaps to Madame de Longu She is all-powerful there, and will assist me. Only i should be arrested, contrive to let me know by some one I will then do my best to get to you."

"And why not risk being arrested with me, Aramis? manded Athos.

"No, I thank you."

"Being all four arrested and united, I think that we s run no risk. At the end of four-and-twenty hours we s all be free."

"My dear, since I slew Châtillon, the idol of the ladi St. Germain, I have too much personal celebrity not to h double dread of imprisonment. The Queen would be inc to follow Mazarin's advice on such an occasion, and he sel he would give would be to have me convicted."

"But do you think, Aramis, that she loves this Italia much as they say?"

"She certainly loved an Englishman."

"Ah! my dear fellow, she is a woman."

"No; you are mistaken, Athos: she is a queen!"

"My dear friend, I devote myself, and shall ask an of Anne of Austria."

"Adieu, Athos! I am going to levy an army."

"For what?"

"To return and besiege Rueil."

"Where shall we meet again?"

"At the foot of the Cardinal's gallows."

And the two friends separated, Aramis to return to Paris, Athos to open up a way to the Queen by some preparatory steps.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE GRATITUDE OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

ATHOS found much less difficulty than he anticipated in making his way to Anne of Austria. On the contrary, everything went smoothly from the first, and the audience that he desired was granted for the following day, at the termination of the levee, to attend which he was entitled by his rank.

A vast crowd filled the apartments at St. Germain; never, either at the Louvre or at the Palais Royal, had Anne of Austria a greater number of courtiers. They were, however, chiefly composed of the nobles of the second rank; while the first gentlemen of France were with M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, and the coadjutor.

It was the peculiar characteristic of this war that there were more couplets composed than cannon-shot fired. The Court made ballads on the Parisians, who, in turn, lampooned the Court; and the wounds, although not mortal, were not the less painful, inflicted, as it were, by the shafts of ridicule.

But, in the midst of this general hilarity and this apparent feeling, a mighty anxiety was hidden in the depths of all their thoughts. Would Mazarin remain minister and favorite, or depart? Or would Mazarin, who came from the south like a cloud, depart like a cloud carried away by the wind that had brought him? Every one hoped it, every one desired it — so much so that the Minister felt that all the homage and all the flattery that surrounded him concealed a mine of hatred imperfectly disguised by fear and interest. He felt ill at ease, not knowing whom to trust or whom to depend on.

M. le Prince himself, who was contending for him, never let slip an opportunity to ridicule or to humble him; and on two or three occasions when Mazarin wished to have his own way before the conqueror of Rocroy, he had received from him

such a look as made him understand that if he defended him it was neither from conviction nor from enthusiasm.

Then the Cardinal fell back on the Queen, his sole support. But on two or three occasions he fancied that even this support was tottering beneath his hand.

The hour of audience having arrived, the Comte de la Fère was informed that it would take place, but that he must wait a short time, as the Queen had to consult with her Minister.

This was true. Paris had just sent a fresh deputation authorized at last to give a final turn to affairs; and the Queen was consulting with Mazarin as to the reception she should give these deputies.

The anxiety was very great amongst the principal persons of the State. Athos, therefore, could not have chosen a worse time to speak of his friends — poor atoms lost amid this tumultuous whirlwind.

But Athos was a most inflexible man, who never parleyed when he had once made a decision that emanated from his conscience and was dictated by his duty. So he insisted on being presented, saying that though he was not sent by M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, M. d'Elbeuf, the coadjutor, Madame de Longueville, M. de Broussel, or by the Parliament, but merely came on his own account, he had things of not less importance to communicate to her Majesty.

When the conference was finished, the Queen summoned him to her cabinet.

Athos was introduced and gave his name. It was a name that had too often resounded in her Majesty's ears, and too often vibrated in her heart, for Anne of Austria to forget it. Nevertheless, she remained perfectly unmoved, contenting herself with looking at the gentleman with that earnestness which is only permitted to women who are queens, either by virtue of their beauty or their rank.

"Are you come to offer us your services, Count?" asked Anne of Austria, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, madame, another service," said Athos, shocked by the Queen appearing not to recollect him.

Athos had a great heart, and consequently made a bad courtier.

Anne frowned. Mazarin, who was seated at a table, handling papers like a simple secretary of State, raised his head.

"Speak," said the Queen.

Mazarin again began handling his papers.

"Madame," replied Athos, "two of our friends, — two of your Majesty's most intrepid servants, — M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon, having been sent to England by the Cardinal, have suddenly disappeared at the very moment when they landed in France, and it is not known what has become of them."

"Well?" said the Queen.

"Well, then," continued Athos, "I address myself to your Majesty's kindness to know what has become of these gentlemen, reserving my right, should it be necessary, to appeal to your justice."

"Sir," said Anne of Austria, with that haughtiness which when used toward some men became impertinence, "is this, then, the reason that you trouble us in the midst of the great cares that disturb us? An affair of police! Ah, sir, you know well enough, or you ought to know, that we have no longer any police since we have left Paris."

"I believe," said Athos, bowing with a cold respect, "that your Majesty would not have any need to inquire of the police what has become of M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon, and that if you would ask Monsieur le Cardinal where these gentlemen are, Monsieur le Cardinal could himself answer, without referring to anything else than his memory."

"Well, God forgive me!" said Anne of Austria, with that disdainful motion of the lips characteristic of her; "I verily believe that you interrogate me yourself."

"Yes, madame; and I have almost the right to do so; for it concerns M. d'Artagnan — M. d'Artagnan, do you understand, madame?" said he, in a tone that made the Queen's haughty brow bend at the thought that she was a woman.

Mazarin saw that it was time for him to come to the Queen's aid.

"Monsou le Comte," said he, "I wish to tell you one thing, of which her Majesty is ignorant; and that is, what has really happened to those two gentlemen. They have disobeyed orders and are under arrest."

"I therefore entreat your Majesty," said Athos, still cool, and without answering Mazarin, "to release M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon from their confinement."

"What you ask of me is an affair of discipline, and does not concern me, sir," replied the Queen.

"M. d'Artagnan never gave such an answer when he was engaged in your Majesty's service," said Athos, bowing with dignity.

And he took two steps back to reach the door. Mazarin stopped him.

"You are also just come from England, sir," said he, making a sign to the Queen, who turned visibly pale, and was preparing to give some severe order.

"And I was present at the last moments of King Charles I.," said Athos. "Poor King! Only guilty of weakness at most, and punished most severely by his subjects; for thrones are greatly shaken in these days, and it yields no satisfaction to devoted hearts to serve the interests of princes. This was the second time that M. d'Artagnan had visited England: the first was for a great Queen's honour; the second, for a great King's life."

"Sir," said Anne of Austria to Mazarin, in a tone from which all her habit of dissimulation was not able to drive the genuine expression, "see if you cannot do something for these gentlemen."

"Madame," replied Mazarin, "I will do whatever your Majesty pleases."

"Do what M. le Comte de la Fère requests. Is not that your name, sir?"

"I have yet another name, madame. I am called Athos."

"Madame," said Mazarin, with a smile that proved how quick he was in understanding half a word, "you may be assured that your wishes shall be complied with."

"Did you hear, sir?" asked the Queen.

"Yes, madame; and I expected no less from your Majesty's justice. Therefore I shall see my friends again, shall I not, madame? That is what your Majesty means?"

"Yes, sir; you shall soon see them again. But, by the way, you are a Frondeur, are you not?"

"Madame, I serve the King."

"Yes, in your own manner."

"My manner is that of all true gentlemen, and I know no other," replied Athos haughtily."

"Go then, sir," said the Queen, dismissing Athos by a motion of her hand; "you have obtained what you desired to obtain, and we know all that we wished to learn."

Then, when the door was closed behind him, addressing Mazarin:

"Cardinal," said she, "have this insolent gentleman arrested before he has left the courtyard."

"I was thinking of that," said Mazarin, "and I am happy that your Majesty gives me this order, for I was going to ask it of you. These turbulent fellows, who bring to our times the traditions of another reign, are very troublesome; and since we have already taken two of the number, let us add the third to them."

Athos had not been entirely the Queen's dupe. There had been in her manner something that struck him as peculiarly threatening, even while she was promising. But he was not a man to take himself out of the way on a simple suspicion, especially when he had been clearly told that he should soon see his friends. So he waited in one of the rooms adjoining the cabinet where he had had his audience, until they should either bring D'Artagnan and Porthos to him or come to lead him to them.

While waiting, he went up to the window, and was mechanically looking out into the courtyard. He saw the deputation from Paris just coming in, to settle upon the place where the conferences were to be held, and to pay their respects to the Queen. There were parliamentary counsellors, presidents, and advocates, among whom some gentlemen were almost lost. An imposing escort was waiting for them outside the iron-grated gates.

Athos was looking earnestly down, for amid the throng he fancied he recognised some one, when he was lightly touched on the shoulder. He turned round.

"Ah, Monsieur de Comminges!" said he.

"Yes, Count, and charged with an order for which I must beg you to excuse me."

"What is it, sir?" asked Athos.

"Be kind enough to hand me your sword, Count?"

Athos smiled, and opening the window:

"Aramis!" he cried.

A gentleman turned round; it was he whom Athos thought he recognised. This gentleman was Aramis; he bowed in a friendly way to the Count.

"Aramis," said Athos, "I am arrested."

"Very well," replied Aramis, most phlegmatically.

"Sir," said Athos, turning to Comminges, and with great politeness presenting him his sword by the handle, "here is my

sword. I will thank you to keep it carefully, that it may be returned to me when I come out of prison. I treasure it: 't was given to my grandfather by King Francis I. In those days they did not disarm gentlemen: they armed them. Now, where are you going to conduct me?"

"First to my own apartment," replied Comminges. "The Queen will decide where you will hereafter reside."

Athos followed Comminges without adding a single word.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

M. DE MAZARIN'S ROYALTY.

THE arrest of Athos did not make the slightest commotion; it caused no scandal, and, in short, was almost unknown. So it had not hindered the progress of events; and the deputation sent by the city of Paris was told, with great solemnity, that it might present itself before the Queen.

The Queen received it, mute and haughty as ever. She listened to the grievances and demands of the deputies; but when they had finished their discourse, no one could have said. so indifferent had remained Anne of Austria's face, whether she had heard them or not.

On the other hand, Mazarin, who was present, heard perfectly well what the deputies had demanded: it was, purely and simply, his dismissal, in clear and precise terms.

The speeches being concluded and the Queen remaining silent:

"Gentlemen," said Mazarin, "I will unite with you in supplicating the Queen to put an end to the miseries of her subjects. I have done all I could to ameliorate them; and yet the public belief, you say, attributes them to me, a poor foreigner, who have not succeeded in pleasing the French. Alas! they have not understood me; and it was natural enough. I succeeded the most eminent man that ever upheld the sceptre of the kings of France. The recollection of M. de Richelieu crushed me to the earth. If I were ambitious I should in vain struggle against such recollections. But I am not ambitious; [illegible] wish to give a proof of it. I confess myself vanquishe[illegible]o what the people demands. If the

sians have committed some errors — and who has not done
;entlemen ? — they have been sufficiently punished for it.
ugh of blood has flowed — sufficient misery overwhelms
;y deprived of its King, and of justice. It is not for me, a
ate individual, to assume so much importance as to sep-
e a Queen from her realm ! — and since, in the name of the
)le, you demand that I retire, well, then, I will retire."
Then," said Aramis in his neighbour's ear, " peace is made
the conferences are nugatory. There is nothing more to
han to send M. Mazarin, under a strong guard, to the most
ote frontier, and to watch that he does not return by that
ny of the others."
One moment, sir, one moment, if you please ! " said the
/er whom Aramis addressed. " Peste ! how you go on !
s quite plain enough that you are gentlemen of the sword.
re is the chapter of remunerations and indemnities to be
)osed of."
Monsieur le Chancelier," said the Queen, addressing
.ier, our old acquaintance, " you will open the conferences,
:h will be held at Rueil. The Cardinal has said things
have greatly agitated me. That is why I do not answer
more fully. As for what he says about remaining or
.rting, I have too much gratitude to the Cardinal not to
e him entire freedom of action. The Cardinal will do just
t he pleases."
transient pallor flitted across the Minister's intelligent
. He looked anxiously at the Queen: her countenance
so impassible that he could not, any more than the others,
. what was passing in her heart.
But," added the Queen, " while we wait for M. de Ma-
.'s decision, I beg of you let the King's interests alone be
.idered."
he deputies bowed and left the room.
What ! " said the Queen, when the last had left the room,
)uld you give way to these pettifoggers and lawyers ? "
For your Majesty's happiness, madame," replied Mazarin,
ing at the Queen with piercing eye, " there is no sacrifice
I am not prepared to make."
nne hung her head, and fell into one of those reveries
were habitual to her. The recollection of Athos re-
ed to her mind. The bold manner of that gentleman —
firm yet dignified language — the phantoms that he had

evoked by one word, recalled to her mind all the intoxicating poetry of the past: her youthful beauty — the brilliancy of her amours at twenty, and the rough combats of her supporters — the sanguinary end of Buckingham, the only man she had ever really loved — and the heroism of her obscure defenders, who had saved her from the double hatred of Richelieu and the King.

Mazarin observed her; and now that she thought herself alone, and that she had no longer a crowd of enemies to spy upon her, he followed the thoughts passing over her face, as one sees the clouds, passing over the surface of transparent lakes, reflected like the thoughts of the sky.

"So it would be wise, would it," murmured Anne of Austria, "to yield to the storm, to purchase a peace, and patiently and resignedly to wait for better times?"

Mazarin smiled bitterly at this proposition, which declared that she had understood the minister's offer as seriously made.

Anne's head was bent down; she did not perceive this smile. But finding that her question received no response, she raised her head:

"Well, Cardinal, you do not answer. What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking, madame, that that insolent gentleman, whom we had arrested by Comminges, made some allusion to M. de Buckingham, whom you allowed to be assassinated: to Madame de Chevreuse, whom you allowed to be exiled; to M. de Beaufort, whom you had imprisoned. But if he alluded to me, he did not know the relation in which I stand to you."

Anne of Austria started, as she always did when her pride was wounded; she coloured, and, to avoid replying, thrust her sharp nails into her fair hands.

"He is a man of great prudence, of honour, and of talent, without reckoning that he is a man of resolution. You have had some experience of that, have you not, madame? So I wish to tell him, and it is a personal favour I thus confer upon him, in what respect he is mistaken concerning me. It is, in truth, that what is proposed to me is almost an abdication, and an abdication requires some reflection."

"An abdication!" said Anne; "I thought, sir, that it was *only kings* who abdicated."

"Well," replied Mazarin, "am I not almost King, and even King of France? I assure you, madame, that when my Ministerial simar is thrown over the foot of a royal bed it much resembles at night a king's mantle."

This was one of those humiliations which Mazarin frequently compelled the Queen to submit to, and which invariably made her bow her head. It was only Elizabeth and Catherine II. who were both mistresses and queens to their lovers.

Consequently Anne of Austria looked with something like terror at the Cardinal's threatening face, which at such moments was not devoid of dignity.

"Sir," said she, "did I not say, and did not you hear me say, to those people that you would do just what you pleased?"

"In that case," said Mazarin, "I believe that I ought to be pleased to remain. It is not only my interest, but I dare to affirm that your own safety depends upon it."

"Remain then, sir; I desire nothing more; but then do not allow me to be insulted."

"You refer to the pretensions of the revolters, and to the tone of their expressions? Patience! They have chosen a field of contest on which I am a more skilful general than themselves — the conferences. We shall beat them, merely by temporising. They are already hungry. It will be worse in a week."

"Ah, mon Dieu! Yes, sir, I know that we shall finish in that way. But I do not refer to them only; they are not the persons who most hurt my feelings by their speeches."

"Ah! I understand you. You wish to speak of the recollections that those three or four gentlemen perpetually evoke. But we have them in prison, and they are just guilty enough for us to keep them there as long as it suits us. One only is out of our power and still braves us; but in the devil's name we shall very soon manage to unite him to his companions. We have done more difficult things than that, I think. I have, in the first place, taken the precaution to confine the two who are most intractable at Rueil, near to myself, under my own eyes and within my own reach. This day the third shall join them."

"So long as they are prisoners, it will be all very well," said Anne of Austria; "but they will come out some day."

"Yes, if your Majesty should liberate them."

"Ah!" said Anne of Austria, answering her own thoughts, "now I regret Paris."

"And why so?"

"For the Bastille, sir; it is so strong and can keep a secret so well."

"Madame, from the conferences we shall have peace; with peace we shall have Paris; with Paris we shall have the Bastille! Our four bravos will rot there."

Anne of Austria slightly frowned, whilst Mazarin kissed her hand in taking leave of her.

Mazarin left the room, after this half humble, half gallant act.

Anne of Austria followed him with her eye, and as he disappeared a disdainful smile might be seen passing across her lips.

"I despised the love of a cardinal," she murmured, "who never said, I *will* do, but I *have* done. He knew retreats more secure than those of Rueil, more dark and mute than the Bastille itself. Oh, the world degenerates!"

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

PRECAUTIONS.

After having left Anne of Austria Mazarin again took the road to Rueil, where his mansion was. During these troublous times Mazarin travelled with a strong escort, and often disguised. The Cardinal, as we have before said, was a very handsome man in the dress of a gentleman of the sword.

In the courtyard of the old château he entered a carriage and drove down to the Seine at Chatou. M. le Prince had furnished him with fifty Light Dragoons as an escort; not so much to guard him as to show the deputies how easily the Queen's generals disposed of the troops, and could send them about at their caprice.

Athos, kept in sight by Comminges, on horseback and without his sword, followed the Cardinal without saying a word. Grimaud, who had been left by his master at the gate of the château, had heard the news of his arrest when Athos called out to Aramis, and, on a sign from the Count, he had gone,

without saying a word, to take his place near Aramis, as if nothing had happened.

It is true that Grimaud, in the twenty-two years that he had served his master, had seen him extricate himself from so many adventures that nothing now disturbed his equanimity.

The deputies, immediately after their audience, had again taken the road to Paris; that is to say, they preceded the Cardinal by about five hundred paces. Athos, therefore, by looking before him, could see the back of Aramis, whose gilded belt and haughty air attracted his attention amid this throng, quite as much as the hopes of deliverance that he had centred in him, or the attachment that usually results from sincere friendship.

Aramis, on the contrary, did not seem to disturb himself at all as to whether he were followed by Athos or not. Once, it is true, he turned round. It was on reaching the château by the river. He supposed that Mazarin might perhaps leave his new prisoner there in the strong little fort that guarded the bridge, where a captain commanded for the Queen. But it was not so. Athos passed Chatou in the Cardinal's train.

At the place where the road branched off from Paris to Reuil, Aramis again turned round. This time he was not mistaken: the Cardinal turned to the right, and Aramis could see the prisoner disappear round the trees. Athos, at the same moment, moved by a similar feeling, also looked back. The two friends exchanged one simple nod, and Aramis put his finger to his hat, as if to salute him. Athos alone understood that his friend made him a signal that he had an idea.

Ten minutes after, Mazarin, with his suite, entered the courtyard of that château which the Cardinal, his predecessor, had put at his disposal at Rueil.

The moment he set his foot on the steps Comminges went up to him. "Monsignor," said he, "where is it your pleasure that we should lodge M. de la Fère?"

"In the pavilion of the orangery, opposite the pavilion where the troops are quartered. I wish to pay M. de la Fère every respect, although he is the Queen's prisoner."

"Monsignor," Comminges ventured to say, "he requests the favour of being conducted to M. D'Artagnan, who occupies, as your Eminence commanded, the hunting pavilion, opposite the orangery."

Mazarin reflected a moment.

Comminges saw that he was reasoning with himself. "The guard is very strong," he continued, "forty tried men, proved soldiers, almost all Germans, and, consequently, having no connection with the Frondeurs and no interest in the Fronde."

"If we were to put those three men together, Monsou de Comminges," said Mazarin, "we should have to double the guard; and we are not rich enough in defenders for such prodigalities."

Comminges smiled. Mazarin saw the smile and understood it.

"You do not know them, Monsou Comminges, but I do; in the first place from themselves, and then by tradition. I ordered them to aid King Charles, and they performed wonderful actions to save him. Fate must have interposed to prevent the dear King Charles from being now safe amongst us."

"But if they served your Eminence so well, why does your Eminence keep them in prison?"

"In prison! And how long has Rueil been a prison?"

"Since there have been prisoners in it," replied Comminges.

"These gentlemen are not my prisoners," said Mazarin, with his cunning smile; "they are my guests — guests so precious that I have had the windows grated, and bolts put on the doors of the apartments they inhabit, so much do I fear that they may be tired of my company. But however they may, apparently, resemble prisoners, I have the very greatest esteem for them; and to prove it, I wish to pay M. de la Fère a visit, to have a *tête-à-tête* with him. So that we may not be interrupted in our conversation, you will conduct him, as I have before said, to the pavilion of the orangery: you know that it is my usual promenade. Well, then, while taking my promenade I will go into his room, and we will have some conversation. However hostile he may be to me, as they pretend, I sympathise with him; and should he prove reasonable, perhaps we may come to some agreement."

Comminges bowed and returned to Athos, who awaited with apparent calmness, but real anxiety, the result of the conference.

"Well?" he asked of the lieutenant of the Guards.

"Sir," said Comminges, "it seems that it is impossible."

"Monsieur de Comminges," said Athos, "I have been a soldier all my life; I know, therefore, what an order is. But independent of this order, you could render me a great *service.*"

"I wish to do it with all my heart, sir," replied Comminges. "Now that I know who you are and what services you formerly rendered her Majesty — now that I know that you are connected with that young man who so gallantly came to my rescue the day I arrested that old rascal Broussel, I declare myself entirely at your service in everything except my orders."

"Thank you, sir, I require no more; and I am going to make one request that will not at all compromise you."

"Should it even compromise me a little, sir," replied Comminges, smiling, "yet make it. I do not love M. Mazarini much more than you do. I serve the Queen, which naturally leads to my serving the Cardinal; but I serve the one with all my heart, and the other against my inclination. Speak, then, I pray you. I await your request."

"As there is no harm in my knowing that M. d'Artagnan is here," said Athos, "I presume that there can be none in his knowing that I also am here."

"I have received no order on that point, sir."

"Very well; then do me the kindness to present my compliments to him, and to tell him that I am his neighbour. You will also inform him, at the same time, of what you told me just now, that M. Mazarin has placed me in the pavilion of the orangery, in order that he may pay me a visit; and you will further apprise him that I will take advantage of that honour to obtain some amelioration of our captivity."

"Which cannot last long," added Comminges; "the Cardinal told me so himself. There is no prison here."

"But there are oubliettes," said Athos, smiling.

"Oh, that is another thing," said Comminges. "Yes, there are traditions on that subject; but a man of low birth like the Cardinal — an Italian, who came to seek his fortune in France — would not dare go to such extremities with men like you; it would be an enormity. It was all very well in the times of the other Cardinal, who was a man of noble birth. But Mons Mazarin! — the oubliettes are royal punishments, which such a pitiful fellow as he is must not meddle with. Your arrest is known, and that of your friends will soon be made public, and all the noblesse of France would demand of him the cause of your disappearance. No, no, do not distress yourself; the oubliettes of Rueil have for the last ten years become traditions to frighten children. So remain without

anxiety in this place. I will inform M. d'Artagnan of your arrival. Who knows but that, in a fortnight, you may render me a similar service?"

"I, sir?"

"Yes, certainly; may I not become a prisoner of the coadjutor's?"

"Believe me, sir," replied Athos, bowing, "that I would, in that case, use every exertion to gratify you."

"Will you do me the honour of supping with me, Count?" said Comminges.

"No, I thank you, sir; I am of a melancholy temperament, and should make you pass a dull evening. No, thank you!"

Comminges then conducted the Count to an apartment on the ground floor of the pavilion, which was a part of the orangery and on a level with it. They reached this orangery by a large court, filled with soldiers and courtiers. This court, which was in the shape of a horseshoe, had in its centre M. de Mazarin's private apartments, and the wings were composed of the pavilion of the orangery, where Athos was now taken, and of the hunting pavilion, where D'Artagnan was. Behind these two wings extended the park.

Athos, on entering the room destined for him, saw walls and roofs through his window, which was carefully grated.

"What building is that?" he asked.

"The back part of the hunting pavilion, where your friends are confined," replied Comminges. "Unfortunately the windows on this side were blocked up in the time of the other Cardinal; for these two buildings have more than once served as a prison, and M. Mazarin, in confining you in them, has but restored them to their original purpose. If these windows had not been blocked up, you might have had the consolation of conversing with your friends by signs."

"And are you quite sure, M. de Comminges, that the Cardinal will do me the honour of visiting me?"

"At least he told me so himself, sir."

Athos sighed on looking at the grated windows.

"Yes, it is true," said Comminges, "it is almost a prison: nothing is wanting, not even the bars. But what singular idea could have taken possession of your mind — you, who are the flower of nobility — to go and waste your valour and loyalty among all those mushrooms of the Fronde? Really, *Count, if* I had ever expected to find any friend in the Royal

army, I should have thought of you. A Frondeur! You, the Comte de la Fère, of the party of a Broussel, of a Blancmesnil, of a Viole! Fie, it would make it credible that madame, your mother, was some little lawyer's wife. You a Frondeur!"

"Faith, my dear sir," said Athos, "it was necessary to be either a Mazarinist or a Frondeur. I made these two words ring in my ear for a long time, and made my decision for the last; it is a French name, at any rate. And besides I am a Frondeur, not with M. Broussel, M. Blancmesnil, or M. Viole, but with M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, and M. d'Elbeuf — with the princes, and not with presidents, councillors, and lawyers. And then the pleasant results of serving the Cardinal! Look at that windowless wall, M. de Comminges, and it will tell you some fine things concerning the Mazarin gratitude."

"Yes," replied Comminges, laughing; "and especially if it repeats the maledictions that M. D'Artagnan has been launching at his head for the last week!"

"Poor D'Artagnan!" said Athos, with that charming melancholy that constituted one of the features of his character; "a man so brave, so good, and so terrific to those who do not love those whom he loves! You have two fierce prisoners there, M. de Comminges, and I pity you if the responsibility for those two indomitable men has been placed on your shoulders."

"Indomitable!" said Comminges, smiling in turn. "Ah, sir, you wish to frighten me. The first day M. D'Artagnan endeavoured to provoke all the soldiers and inferior officers, no doubt to get a sword-thrust; that lasted till the next day, and, indeed, the day after, but at length he became calm and as gentle as a lamb. Now he is singing Gascon songs that make us nearly die with laughter."

"And M. du Vallon?" demanded Athos.

"Oh, he is a horse of another color; I confess that he is a terrific gentleman. The first day he broke all the doors with one blow of his shoulder, and I expected to see him issue forth from Rueil like Samson from Gaza. But his humour has followed the same course as his companion, M. D'Artagnan's; and now he not only is growing reconciled to his captivity, but even jokes about it."

"So much the better," said Athos, "so much the better."

"Did you expect anything else?" asked Comminges, who, by comparing what Mazarin had said of his prisoners with what

the Comte de la Fère said of them, began to feel some misgivings.

Athos was satisfied, on reflection, that this improvement in the *morale* of his friends arose from some plan that D'Artagnan had formed. He did not wish, therefore, to injure them by exalting them too highly.

"Well," said he, "they are hot-headed fellows. One is a Gascon, the other a Picard. Both take fire very quickly, but grow cool as speedily. You have had one proof of it, and what you have just told me confirms what I say."

As this was also Comminges's own opinion, he retired somewhat more assured, and Athos remained alone in his vast room, where, according to the Cardinal's orders, he was treated with the consideration due to a gentleman.

Moreover, he waited for this famous visit promised by the Cardinal, in order to form a more precise idea of his situation.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

MIND AND ARM.

Let us now pass from the orangery to the hunting pavilion.

At the end of the court — where through a portico formed of Ionian pillars the dog-kennels were to be seen — arose an oblong building that appeared to stretch out like an arm to meet the other arm, the pavilion of the orangery, a semicircle enclosing the court of honour.

Porthos and D'Artagnan were confined on the ground floor of this pavilion, sharing the long hours of a captivity so tedious to men of their temperaments.

D'Artagnan was walking up and down like a tiger, with glaring eye, sometimes growling in an undertone through the bars of a wide window looking into the court of the Guards.

Porthos was ruminating in silence, after an excellent dinner, the remnants of which had just been removed.

The one seemed to have lost his reason, and was meditating; the other seemed to be meditating profoundly, and was sleeping; but his sleep was a species of nightmare, as was demonstrated by the incoherent and irregular manner in which he was snoring.

"There," said D'Artagnan, "the day is closing; it must be nearly four o'clock. We have already been almost one hundred and eighty-three hours in this room."

"Hum!" said Porthos, that he might seem to have answered.

"Do you hear, you eternal sleeper?" cried D'Artagnan, irritated that any one could give way to sleep in the daytime, when he had the greatest difficulty in the world to sleep at night.

"What?" said Porthos.

"What I said."

"What did you say?"

"I said," replied D'Artagnan, "that now we have already been almost one hundred and eighty-three hours in this room."

"It is your own fault," replied Porthos.

"How is it my fault?"

"Yes; I offered to get us out."

"By unfastening a bar or breaking open a door?"

"Yes, of course."

"Porthos, such people as we are do not purely and simply go out."

"Faith!" said Porthos, "I would go out with that purity and simplicity that you seem to despise too much."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders.

"Besides," said he, "it is not merely to get out of this room."

"My dear friend," said Porthos, "you seem to me to be in a rather better humour than yesterday. Explain to me how it is not merely to get out of this room."

"Because, as we have neither arms nor countersign, we should not go fifty steps without running against a sentinel."

"Well," said Porthos, "we should knock the sentinel on the head and then have his arms."

"Yes; but before he is altogether knocked on the head (for these Swiss die hard) he would cry out, or at any rate give a groan, which would bring out the guard. We should then be tracked and taken like foxes, — we who are lions, — and we should be thrown into some hole of a dungeon, where we should not even have the consolation of seeing this frightful grey sky of Rueil, that is no more like the sky of Tarbes than the moon is like the sun. If we only had some one outside, some one who could give us instructions on the moral and

physical topography of this château, on what Cæsar called *mores et loca* — at least so I have been told. Ah, only to think that during the twenty years when I had nothing to do, I should never have thought of employing one of those hours in coming and examining Rueil!"

"What does that signify?" said Porthos. "Let us go, nevertheless."

"My dear fellow," said D'Artagnan, "do you know why master pastry-cooks never work with their own hands?"

"No," replied Porthos, "but I should be delighted to learn."

"It is because they are afraid of over-baking a tart or spoiling a cream before their apprentices."

"And what then?"

"Why, then they would be laughed at; and master pastry-cooks must never be laughed at."

"And what have master pastry-cooks to do with us?"

"Only this, that in any of our adventures we ought never to receive a check, or to give any one a chance to laugh at us. We failed the last time in England; we were beaten, and it is a stain upon our reputation."

"By whom were we beaten?" asked Porthos.

"By Mordaunt."

"Yes, but we drowned M. Mordaunt."

"I know that well enough, and that will reëstablish us a little in the eyes of posterity, provided that posterity thinks anything about us. But listen, Porthos: although M. Mordaunt was not to be despised, M. Mazarin appears to me to be powerful in quite another manner, and we shall not drown him so easily. Let us look about us, then, and play a cautious game; for," added D'Artagnan with a sigh, "we two are worth eight, perhaps, but we are not worth the four you know of."

"That is true," said Porthos, with a responsive sigh.

"Well then, Porthos, do as I do: walk up and down here till some news from our friends reaches us, or till some good idea suggests itself; but do not be always sleeping, as you are; there is nothing that deadens the faculties like sleep. What awaits us perhaps is less serious than we at first imagined. I do not think that M. Mazarin has any idea of cutting off our heads, because he could not well do that without a *previous* trial; and the trial would make a noise, and this

noise would attract the attention of our friends, and then they would not permit M. Mazarin to do what he pleased."

"How well you reason!" said Porthos, with admiration.

"Why, yes, not badly," said D'Artagnan. "And then, do you see, if they do not try us or cut off our heads, they must either keep us here or send us somewhere else."

"Yes, that is absolutely necessary," said Porthos.

"Well, then, it is impossible that Master Aramis, that acute bloodhound, and Athos, that wise gentleman, should not discover our retreat. Then, in sooth, it will be time enough."

"Yes; and the more so as one is not absolutely badly off here — with one exception, however."

"And what is that?"

"Have you remarked, D'Artagnan, that they have given us baked mutton three days running?"

"No; but if they should bring it on a fourth time, depend upon it I will complain."

"And, besides, I sometimes miss my home. It is a long time since I have visited my châteaux."

"Bah! forget them for the present. We shall find them again; unless M. Mazarin has razed them to the ground."

"Do you think that he can have been guilty of such tyranny?" demanded Porthos, with some anxiety.

"No; such things were all very well for the other Cardinal. This one is too small to risk such things."

"You make me more easy, D'Artagnan."

"Well, then, put a good face on the matter, as I do. Let us joke with our guards; let us interest our soldiers, as we cannot bribe them; wheedle them a little more than you do, Porthos, when they come under our windows. So far you have done nothing but hold up your fist at them; and the more respectable your fist is, Porthos, the less attractive it is. Ah! I would give a good deal only to have five hundred louis!"

"And I also," said Porthos, who did not wish to be behind D'Artagnan in generosity; "I would give — a hundred pistoles."

The two prisoners had reached this part of their conversation when Comminges entered, preceded by a sergeant and two men, who carried the supper on a tray filled with plates and dishes.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

MIND AND ARM. (*Continuation.*)

"Good!" exclaimed Porthos. "Mutton again!"

"My dear Monsieur de Comminges," said D'Artagnan, "you must know that my friend M. du Vallon is resolved to proceed to the very greatest extremities, if M. Mazarin persists in feeding him on that kind of meat."

"I declare even," said Porthos, "that I will eat of nothing else, if that be not carried away."

"Take away the mutton," said Comminges; "I wish M. du Vallon to sup agreeably, more especially as I have a piece of news for him which I am sure will improve his appetite."

"Is M. de Mazarin dead?" inquired Porthos.

"No; I regret to inform you that he is remarkably well."

"So much the worse," growled Porthos.

"And what is this news?" asked D'Artagnan. "News is such a rare fruit in prison that I hope you will excuse my impatience, Monsieur de Comminges? The more so as you have told us that the news is good."

"Would you be pleased to hear that M. le Comte de la Fère is in good health?" replied Comminges.

D'Artagnan's small eyes opened their widest.

"Should I be pleased!" he exclaimed. "I should be more than pleased — it would make me quite happy."

"Well, then, I am commissioned by him to present you his compliments, and to tell you that he is in good health."

D'Artagnan nearly jumped for joy. One rapid glance at Porthos explained his thoughts. "If Athos knows where we are," said this glance, "if he sends us a message, he will shortly begin to act."

Porthos was not very skilful in understanding glances; but this time, as he had felt the same impression on hearing Athos's name, he comprehended.

"But," timidly inquired the Gascon, "you say that the Comte de la Fère commissioned you to give us his compliments?"

"Yes, sir."

"So you have seen him?"

"Certainly."

"Where, if it be not impertinent?"

"Very near here!" replied Comminges, smiling.

"Very near here?" exclaimed D'Artagnan, his eyes sparkling with delight.

"So near that if the windows facing the orangery were not blocked up, you might see him from where you stand."

"He is prowling about near the château," thought D'Artagnan. Then he said aloud, "You met him while hunting in the park, perhaps?"

"No, nearer — nearer still. Observe, behind this wall," said Comminges, striking against the wall.

"Behind that wall! What is there, then, behind this wall? I was brought here at night; the devil take me, therefore, if I know where I am!"

"Well," said Comminges, "suppose one thing."

"I will suppose anything you like."

"Suppose that there was a window in this wall."

"Well."

"Well, then, from this window you might see M. de la Fère at his."

"So then M. de la Fère is lodged at the château?"

"Yes."

"In what character?"

"In the same character as yourself."

"Is Athos a prisoner?"

"You know very well," said Comminges, smiling, "that there are no prisoners at Rueil, since there is no prison."

"Let us not play on words, sir. Has Athos been arrested?"

"Yesterday evening, at St. Germain, on leaving the Queen."

D'Artagnan's arms fell powerless by his sides. He looked thunderstruck. The pallor flitted like a white cloud over his embrowned countenance, but disappeared almost immediately.

"A prisoner!" he repeated.

"A prisoner!" repeated Porthos, equally cast down.

Suddenly D'Artagnan raised his head, and a gleam of light shot from his eyes imperceptible even to Porthos. Then the same depression that had preceded it followed this fugitive gleam.

"Come, come," said Comminges, who had a real feeling of affection for D'Artagnan since the signal service that he had rendered him on the day of Broussel's arrest by rescuing him from the hands of the Parisians, — "come, do not despond.

I did not expect to bring you melancholy intelligence — far from it. In consequence of this war we are all uncertain creatures. So be glad at the chance that thus brings you and your friend so near to each other, instead of lamenting it."

But this encouragement had no effect upon D'Artagnan, who still retained his lugubrious air.

"And how does he bear it?" asked Porthos, who, seeing that D'Artagnan allowed the conversation to drop, took advantage of it to slip in a word.

"Very well, indeed," replied Comminges. "At first, like yourselves, he appeared very desponding; but when he learnt that the Cardinal meant to pay him a visit this very evening" —

"Ah!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "the Cardinal is going to pay the Comte de la Fère a visit?"

"Yes, he sent him word that he would; and the Comte de la Fère, when he heard it, charged me to tell you that he would take advantage of this favour of the Cardinal's to plead your cause and his own."

"Ah, dear Count!" said D'Artagnan.

"A fine thing, indeed!" growled out Porthos — "a great favour, pardieu! The Comte de la Fère, whose family is connected with the Montmorencies and the Rohans, is certainly equal to M. Mazarin."

"Never mind, my dear Du Vallon," said D'Artagnan, in his most innocent manner; "when you think it over, 't is a great honour to the Comte de la Fère, and more especially as it excites great hopes. A visit! In my opinion, the honour is so great for a prisoner that I think M. Comminges must be mistaken!"

"What! I mistaken?"

"It cannot be that M. Mazarin will go and visit M. de la Fère, but M. de la Fère will be sent for to M. Mazarin."

"No, no, no!" said Comminges, who persisted in establishing his facts in all their exactitude; "I perfectly understood the Cardinal. He is going to visit the Comte de la Fère."

D'Artagnan tried to catch Porthos's eye, to discover whether he understood the importance of this visit, but Porthos did not even look at him.

"So it is the Cardinal's custom to walk in the orangery, is it?" asked D'Artagnan.

"He shuts himself up there every evening," said Comminges. "It seems that he meditates there on State affairs."

"Then," said D'Artagnan, "I begin to believe that M. de la Fère will receive a visit from his Eminence. But of course he will be attended by some one?"

"Yes, by two soldiers."

"And will he talk of business before two strangers?"

"The soldiers are Swiss, from the little cantons, and speak nothing but German. Besides, in all probability they will wait at the door."

D'Artagnan dug his nails into the palms of his hands, to prevent his face from betraying any other expression than what he wished to express.

"M. Mazarin must take care not to enter the Comte de la Fère's apartment alone," said D'Artagnan, "for the Count must be quite furious."

Comminges began to laugh.

"Ah ça! Really one would imagine you were anthropophagi! M. de la Fère is courteous, he is unarmed; and besides, at the first cry that his Eminence uttered, the two soldiers who always accompany him would rush in."

"Two soldiers?" said D'Artagnan, pretending to ponder. "Ah, yes, two soldiers; that is the reason, then, why I hear them call two men every evening, and that I sometimes see them walking back and forth, for half an hour, under our window."

"Exactly so; they are waiting for the Cardinal, or Bernouin rather, who comes to call them when the Cardinal issues forth."

"Fine men, i' faith!" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes; it is the regiment that was at Lens, and which M. le Prince has given the Cardinal to do him honour."

"Ah, sir," said D'Artagnan, as if to sum up this long conversation in one word, "if only his Eminence would be softened and grant M. de la Fère our liberty!"

"I hope so with all my heart," said Comminges.

"Therefore, if he should forget to pay this visit, you would see no impropriety in reminding him of it?"

"None whatever; quite the contrary."

"Well, that makes me feel easier."

This skilful change of the conversation would have appeared a sublime manœuvre to any one who could have read the Gascon's soul.

"Now," said he, "a last favour, my dear Monsieur de Comminges, I beg of you?"

"I am entirely at your disposal, sir."

"Shall you see M. de la Fère again?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Will you wish him good morning for us, and ask him to solicit the same favour for me as he will have received himself?"

"Do you wish the Cardinal to come here?"

"No; I know myself better, and am not so presumptuous. If his Eminence will only do me the honour to give me an audience, it is all that I require."

"Oh!" murmured Porthos, "I never could have believed it of him! How misfortune debases a man!"

"That shall be done," said Comminges.

"Assure the Count, also, that I am very well — that you saw me sad, but resigned."

"You give me great pleasure, sir, in hearing this."

"You will also say the same thing for M. du Vallon."

"For me? No!" roared Porthos; "I am not resigned at all!"

"But you will become resigned, my friend."

"Never!"

"He will become resigned, Monsieur de Comminges. I know him better than he knows himself; and I know a thousand good qualities in him that he himself does not even suspect. Be silent, my dear Du Vallon, and be resigned."

"Adieu, gentlemen," said Comminges. "Goodnight."

"We will endeavour to pass one," said D'Artagnan.

Comminges bowed and left the room. D'Artagnan followed him, with his eyes in the same humble position, and with the same expression of resignation in his countenance. But scarcely was the door shut on the captain of the Guards, than, starting at Porthos, he hugged him in his arms with an expression of joy that could not be misunderstood.

"Oho!" cried Porthos, "what is the matter now? — have you gone crazy?"

"The matter is that we are saved!"

"I do not see the slightest signs of that," replied Porthos: "on the contrary, I see that we are all taken except Aramis, and that our chances of escape are diminished, since one more has got into M. Mazarin's mouse-trap."

"Not at all, Porthos, my friend. This mouse-trap, which *was strong* enough for two, will be found too weak for three."

"I do not understand at all," said Porthos.

"Never mind," said D'Artagnan; "let us take our places at table and get some strength; we shall want it to-night."

"What are we going to do to-night?" demanded Porthos, more and more puzzled.

"We shall probably take a journey."

"But"—

"Sit down, my dear friend; while I am eating ideas come to me. After supper, when my ideas have reached their climax, I will let you know what they are!"

However anxious Porthos might have been to be made acquainted with D'Artagnan's project, as he knew his friend's manner of acting he sat down at table without further ado, and ate with an appetite that did honour to the confidence inspired in him by D'Artagnan's imagination.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

ARM AND MIND.

THE supper was silent, but not melancholy; for from time to time over D'Artagnan flitted one of those sly smiles characteristic of him in moments of good-humour. Porthos did not lose one of these smiles, and at each of them uttered some exclamation which indicated to his friend that, although he did not understand, he had not lost sight of the idea that was fermenting in his mind.

At dessert D'Artagnan threw himself back in his chair, crossed one leg over the other, and dandled it, with an air of perfect self-satisfaction.

Porthos put his elbows on the table, rested his chin on both his hands, and looked at D'Artagnan with an air of confidence that gave to the colossus an admirable expression of most perfect good-humour.

"Well?" said D'Artagnan, after a moment's silence.

"Well?" repeated Porthos.

"You were saying, then, my dear friend"—

"I? I did not say anything."

"Yes, you did; you said that you desire to leave this place."

"Ah! yes, the desire is not lacking."

"And you were also saying that to get out it was only necessary to break open a door or a wall."

"Yes, I said so; and I say so again."

"And I replied that it was a bad method, and that we should not take a hundred steps without being caught and knocked on the head; unless we had clothes to disguise us and arms with which to defend ourselves."

"It is true; we should want clothes and arms."

"Well, then," said D'Artagnan, rising, "we have got them, friend Porthos, and something better into the bargain!"

"Bah!" said Porthos, looking round him.

"Do not look round you; it is perfectly useless; everything will come to you when you want it. About what time was it we saw the Swiss Guards walking up and down yesterday?"

"An hour after the evening had closed in, I think," replied Porthos.

"If they come out to-day as they did yesterday, we shall not have above a quarter of an hour to wait for the pleasure of their appearance."

"Only a quarter at the most."

"Your arm is still pretty good, is it not, Porthos?"

Porthos unbuttoned his shirt sleeve, pulled it up, and looked with complacency at his brawny arm, which was as stout as an ordinary man's thigh.

"Why, yes," said he, "pretty good."

"So that, without putting yourself to much inconvenience, you could make a hoop of these tongs and a screw of this shovel?"

"Certainly," replied Porthos.

"Let us see," said D'Artagnan.

The giant took the two articles referred to, and performed the desired metamorphoses with the greatest facility, and without any apparent effort.

"There!" said he.

"Magnificent!" said D'Artagnan. "Verily, Porthos, you are gifted."

"I have heard," said Porthos, "of a certain Milo of Crotona, who performed some extraordinary actions, such as tying a cord around his forehead and breaking it, killing an ox with a blow of his fist and carrying it home on his shoulders, or stopping a horse by his hind legs, etc., etc. I had all these *acts of prowess* recounted to me at Pierrefonds, and I did all

that he did, except breaking a cord by the swelling of my temples."

"That is because your strength does not lie in your head, Porthos," said D'Artagnan.

"No, it is in my arms and my shoulders," responded Porthos, with simplicity.

"Well, then, my friend, go up to that window and use your strength to unfasten a bar. Wait till I put out the lamp."

CHAPTER XC.

ARM AND MIND. (*Continuation.*)

PORTHOS went to the window, took hold of a bar with both his hands, clutched it, drew it toward him and made it bend like a bow — so much so that the two ends came out of the notches in the stone into which they had been cemented for thirty years.

"There, now, my friend, that is what the Cardinal could never have done, man of genius as he is."

"Need I take out any more?" asked Porthos.

"No, that will be sufficient for us; a man can pass through now."

Porthos made the trial, and could get his whole body out.

"Yes," said he.

"In fact, it is a mighty pretty opening. Now pass your arm through."

"Through where?"

"Through that opening."

"What for?"

"You will soon know. Meanwhile, put it through."

Porthos obeyed, docile as a soldier, and passed his arm through the bars.

"Excellent!" said D'Artagnan.

"It appears that all goes well."

"On wheels, my dear friend."

"Good! Now what must I do?"

"Nothing."

"Why! Is it done?"

"Not yet."

"I should like to understand, however," said Porthos.

"Listen, then, my dear friend, and in two words you will be quite *au fait*. The door of the guard-room is opening, as you see."

"Yes, I see."

"They are going to send into our court the two soldiers who are to attend M. Mazarin, who will cross it to go into the orangery."

"There, they are now coming out."

"If they would only shut the guard-room door! Good! They are shutting it."

"What next?"

"Silence! They might hear us."

"So then I am to know nothing?"

"Yes; for as you execute you will understand."

"And yet I should have preferred" —

"You will have the pleasure of a surprise."

"Ah, that is true!" said Porthos.

"Hush!"

Porthos remained mute and motionless.

In fact, the two soldiers came toward the window, rubbing their hands; for it was, as we have said, the month of February and very cold.

At this moment the guard-room door opened and one of the soldiers was called back. The soldier left his comrade and re-entered the guard-room.

"Is that all right?" inquired Porthos.

"Better than ever," replied D'Artagnan. "Now listen: I am going to call that soldier, and to talk with him, as I did with one of his comrades yesterday. Do you remember?"

"Yes; only I did not understand one word that he said."

"He certainly had a rather peculiar accent. But do not lose one word that I say to you. Everything depends upon the execution, Porthos."

"Good! The execution — that is my strong point."

"I know that well enough, pardieu! So I depend on you."

"Proceed."

"I am going, therefore, to call that soldier and talk with him."

"You have already told me that."

"I shall turn to the left so that he may be placed on your *right when* he mounts the bench."

"But if he should not mount it?"

"He will mount it; you may depend upon that. Now, then, the moment he mounts the bench you will thrust forth your formidable arm, and will seize him by the neck. Then, raising him up as Tobias raised the fish by the gills, you will lug him into our chamber, taking special care to squeeze him hard enough to prevent his crying out."

"Yes," said Porthos; "but if I should choke him to death?"

"In the first place, there will be but one Swiss less. But you will not choke him to death, I hope. You will then set him gently down here, and we will gag and fasten him; it does not make any difference where, but somewhere. That will, in the first place, procure us one uniform and one sword."

"Wonderful!" said Porthos, looking at his friend with the deepest admiration.

"Hein!" exclaimed the Gascon.

"But," added Porthos, after some consideration, "one uniform and one sword are not enough for two persons."

"Well, now, had he not a comrade?"

"That is true," said Porthos.

"So when I cough, thrust out your arm; that will be the time."

"Good!"

The two friends each took his appointed position. Placed as he was, Porthos found himself entirely concealed in the corner of the window.

"Bon soir, comrade," said D'Artagnan, in his most charming voice, and in his sweetest-modulated diapason.

"Pon soir, monsor," replied the soldier.

"Is it not very warm walking up and down there?" said D'Artagnan.

"B-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!" said the soldier.

"I fancy that a glass of wine would not be disagreeable to you?"

"A class of vein; it foud be fery velcome."

"The fish is biting! The fish is biting!" whispered D'Artagnan to Porthos.

"I understand," said Porthos.

"I have got a bottle here," said D'Artagnan.

"A pottle!"

"Yes."

"A pottle fool?"

"Quite so, and it is yours if you choose to drink it to my health."

"Me vish it vell," said the soldier, drawing near.

"Come, then, and take it, my friend," said the Gascon.

"Fery villingly. I pelieve dat dere is a pench."

"Oh, mon Dieu! one would think that it was placed there on purpose for you. Get up on it — there, very well. That's it, my friend."

And D'Artagnan coughed.

At the same moment Porthos's arm was lowered; his iron hand grasped the soldier's neck as quick as lightning and as firm as a pair of pincers, raised him up, at the same time choking him, drew him through the opening at the risk of skinning him, and laid him on the floor, where D'Artagnan, just giving him time to take one breath, gagged him with his scarf, and the moment he was gagged, set about stripping him with the skill and rapidity of a man who had learnt his business on the field of battle.

Then the soldier, bound and gagged, was carried to the hearth, where the two friends had before extinguished the fire.

"Here at any rate is a dress and one sword," said Porthos.

"I will take them," said D'Artagnan. "If you wish to have another dress and another sword, we must repeat the trick. Attention! I see the other soldier coming out of the guard-room, and in this direction."

"I think," said Porthos, "that it would be imprudent to repeat the same stratagem. I have heard it said that you seldom succeed twice by the same method; and if I should fail, all would be lost. I will crawl out, and just as he passes me I will seize him when he is not at all suspicious, and will hand him to you already gagged."

"That will be the best way," said the Gascon.

"Keep yourself ready, then," said Porthos, as he slipped out of the window.

The thing was executed just as Porthos had promised. The giant concealed himself on the path, and as the soldier passed by, he seized him by the neck, gagged him, pushed him like a mummy through the bars of the window, and got in after him.

The second prisoner was stripped as the first had been.

They laid him on the bed and secured him to it with straps, and as the bed was of massive oak and the straps were doubled, they were as easy about him as they were about the first.

"There," said D'Artagnan, "all that goes excellently well. Now try on that rogue's dress, Porthos. I doubt whether it will fit you; but should it be too tight, never mind; the belt will do, and more especially the hat with the red plumes."

It happened by chance that the second soldier was a gigantic Swiss; so that, except a few stitches that cracked in the seams, everything proceeded in the best manner possible.

For a short time nothing was heard but the rustling of the clothes as Porthos and D'Artagnan hastily dressed themselves.

"It is done," they said at the same time. "As for you, comrades," they added, addressing the two soldiers, "if you are quiet, no harm will befall you; but if you stir, you are dead men!"

The soldiers remained perfectly quiet. They had comprehended, by Porthos's fist, that the affair was of the most serious description, and that there was not the slightest joke in the matter.

"Now," said D'Artagnan, "you would not be sorry to understand something about it, would you, Porthos?"

"Why, yes, it would not be a bad thing."

"Well, then, we get down into the court."

"Yes."

"We take the place of those two jolly fellows there."

"Very well."

"We walk up and down."

"Ah! and a very good thing it will be, as it is not very warm."

"In a short time the valet will call for the guard, as he did yesterday and the day before."

"And we answer?"

"No, we do not answer; quite the reverse."

"Just as you like. I am not particular about answering."

"We do not answer them; we only draw our hats over our heads and escort his Eminence."

"Where to?"

"Where he is going — to Athos's apartment. Do you think that he will be sorry to see us?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Porthos; "oh! I understand now."

"Wait before you cry out, Porthos; for on my word you have not got to the end yet," said the Gascon, in his bantering manner.

"What will happen next, then?" said Porthos.

"Follow me," said D'Artagnan. "He who lives will see."

And passing through the opening, he glided lightly into the court.

Porthos followed him by the same route, though with greater difficulty and not quite so swiftly.

They heard the two soldiers shuddering with fear as they lay bound in the chamber.

D'Artagnan and Porthos had scarcely reached the ground, before a door opened and the voice of the valet was heard calling for the guard: "Le service!"

At the same time the guard-room door opened and another voice cried out, "La Bruyère and Du Barthois, march!"

"It seems that my name is La Bruyère," said D'Artagnan.

"And mine Barthois," said Porthos.

"Where are you?" asked the valet, whose eyes, dazzled by the light, could not perceive our two heroes in the darkness.

"Here we are," replied D'Artagnan. Then, addressing Porthos: "What do you say to that, M. du Vallon?"

"Faith, provided it lasts I say that it is very pretty!"

The two impromptu soldiers marched gravely behind the *valet-de-chambre;* he opened for them a vestibule door; then another, which seemed that of a waiting-room; and then, showing them two stools:

"Your orders are very simple," said he. "Allow only one person to enter this room — one only, do you understand? — no more; this person you must implicitly obey. As for your return, there can be no mistake; you will wait until I relieve you."

D'Artagnan was well known to this valet, who was none other than Bernouin, and who, for the last six or eight months had ushered him into the Cardinal's presence ten or a dozen times. He therefore contented himself with grumbling out *Yah*, with the least Gascon and the most German accent possible.

D'Artagnan had exacted from Porthos a promise that he would not speak under any circumstances. Should he be driven to extremities, he was permitted to bring forth, for all *answer, the* proverbial and solemn *tarteifle.*

Bernouin left the room, closing the doors.

"Oho!" said Porthos, on hearing the key grating in the lock, "it seems that here it is the fashion to lock people up. It seems to me we have only exchanged prisons; the only difference is, that instead of being prisoners up there, we are prisoners in the orangery. I do not know whether we have gained anything by it."

"Porthos, my friend," whispered D'Artagnan, "do not distrust Providence, and let me meditate and reflect."

"Meditate and reflect, then," said Porthos, annoyed that things turned out in this manner, instead of in some other way.

"We have marched eighty paces," said D'Artagnan, "and we have mounted six steps. Therefore, as my illustrious friend Du Vallon has said here, the other pavilion, called the pavilion of the orangery, must be parallel with our own, and the Comte de la Fère, therefore, cannot be far off; only the doors are closed."

"That is a mighty difficulty!" said Porthos; "and with one blow of the shoulder" —

"For God's sake! Porthos, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "regulate your feats of strength, or they will not, on proper occasions, have all the value they deserve. Did you not hear that some one was coming to us here?"

"Certainly I did."

"Well, then, this some one will open the doors for us."

"But, my dear," said Porthos, "if this some one should detect us, and if this some one on detecting us should call out, we are lost. For, after all, you do not intend, I imagine, to make me knock this Churchman on the head, or choke him to death. That kind of work is all very well against the English and Germans."

"Oh, God preserve me from that, and you also, Porthos!" said D'Artagnan. "The young King would perhaps be grateful to us for it; but the Queen would never pardon us; and she is the person who must be managed. Besides, it would be unnecessary bloodshed. Oh, never, never! I have got my plan. So let me act, and we shall have cause to laugh."

"So much the better," said Porthos, "for I have need of it."

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan; "here comes the some one we spoke of!"

They heard the sound of a light step in the vestibule. The

hinges of the door creaked, and in came a man dressed as a cavalier, covered with a brown cloak, a large hat drawn down over his eyes, and a lantern in his hand.

Porthos made himself as small as possible against the wall; but he could not make himself so invisible but that the man in the cloak saw him. He held out the lantern to him and said,

"Light the ceiling lamp."

Then, addressing D'Artagnan:

"You have received your orders?" said he.

"*Yah*," replied the Gascon, determined to confine himself to that sample of the German language.

"*Tedesco*," said the cavalier. "*Va bene.*"

And going toward the door opposite that by which he had entered, he opened it and disappeared behind it, fastening it after him.

"And now," said Porthos, "what shall we do?"

"Now we will make use of your shoulder if this door should be fastened, friend Porthos. Everything has its proper time and season, and everything comes to him who can wait. But let us barricade the first door in a suitable and convenient manner, and then we will follow the cavalier."

The two friends set to work immediately, and heaped up against the door all the furniture they found in the room, and the obstruction was more complete as the door opened inwards.

"There!" said D'Artagnan; "now we are sure of not being surprised in the rear, let us go forward."

CHAPTER XCI.

M. DE MAZARIN'S OUBLIETTES.

THEY went to the door through which Mazarin had disappeared; it was fastened; D'Artagnan in vain endeavoured to open it.

"Here is a chance for your shoulder," said D'Artagnan. "Push, my friend, but gently, without noise. Do not break anything; only separate the divisions a little; that 's all."

Porthos applied his robust shoulder to one portion of the folding-door, which gave way so as to enable D'Artagnan to introduce the point of his sword between the bolt and the

staple of the lock; the bolt, being bevelled, yielded, and the door opened.

"Did not I tell you, friend Porthos, that all women and doors are to be managed by gentleness?"

"The fact is," said Porthos, "that you are a great moralist."

"Let us go in," said D'Artagnan.

They went in. Behind glass windows, and by the light of the Cardinal's lantern placed on the floor in the middle of the gallery, could be seen the orange and pomegranate trees of the Château of Rueil, set in long rows, forming a long alley with a smaller one on each side of it.

"No Cardinal," said D'Artagnan, "but only his lamp. Now, where the devil is he?"

And as he examined one of the smaller aisles, having directed Porthos to examine the other, he suddenly perceived, to his left, an orange-tree tub removed from its position, and instead of the tub a wide opening.

Ten men could scarcely have moved this tub; but by some mechanical process, it turned with the slab on which it rested.

D'Artagnan, as we have said, saw an opening in its place, and in the opening the steps of a winding staircase.

He beckoned Porthos to come to him, and showed him the opening and the steps.

The two men looked at each other with an astonished air.

"If we had only wanted gold," said D'Artagnan, in a very low voice, "we should have gained our object, and been rich forever."

"How is that?"

"Do you not understand, Porthos, that in all probability there is to be found at the bottom of this staircase the Cardinal's famous treasure of which so much is said; and that we should only have to go down, empty a chest, fasten the Cardinal in it with the double lock, and, after replacing this orange-tree, go off, taking with us as much gold as we could carry; and that no one in the world could question us as to whence we derived our fortune — not even the Cardinal?"

"It would be a fine stroke for clowns," said Porthos, "but unworthy of gentlemen, it seems to me."

"I am of the same opinion," replied D'Artagnan; "so I said, 'If we had wanted gold.' But we want something else."

At the same moment, and while D'Artagnan was leaning

his head over the cavern to listen, a dry metallic sound, like that of a bag of gold moving, struck on his ear. He started. Immediately a door was shut, and the first rays of a light appeared on the stairs. Mazarin had left his lamp in the orangery, to induce a belief that he was walking about; but he had a wax taper with which to go down into his mysterious strong box.

"Ah!" said he in Italian, while he was slowly mounting the steps examining a bag of reals with its rotund paunch, — "ah! there is the wherewithal to pay five Parliamentary councillors and two Parisian generals And I, also, am a great captain — only I make war in my own fashion."

D'Artagnan and Porthos were out of sight in one of the side alleys, each behind an orange-tree tub, and were listening.

Mazarin came within three paces of D'Artagnan, to push a spring concealed in the wall. The slab turned, and the orange-tree resting on it returned to its place.

Then the Cardinal extinguished his taper, put it into his pocket, and taking up his lamp again:

"Now we will go and see M. de la Fère," said he.

"Good! That is our road," thought D'Artagnan; "we will go together."

They all three set off, Mazarin going down the centre alley and D'Artagnan and Porthos down the parallel ones. The two men, of course, carefully avoided those long lines of light thrown by the Cardinal's lamp between the orange-tree tubs.

Mazarin reached a second glass door without perceiving that he was followed, the soft sand deadening the steps of the two who were accompanying him. Then he turned to the left and went down a corridor which Porthos and D'Artagnan had not observed; but at the moment that he opened the door, he stopped to think.

"Ah! *Diavolo!*" said he. "I forgot Comminges's caution. I must get the soldiers and place them at the door, that I may not put myself at the mercy of this devil of a fellow. Come!"

And with an impatient gesture he turned to go back again.

"Do not give yourself the trouble, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, with one foot in advance, his hat in his hand, and a most gracious smile. "We have followed your Eminence step by step, and here we are!"

"Yes, here we are!" said Porthos.

And he made the same graceful form of salutation.

Mazarin cast his terrified glances from one to the other, recognised them both, and dropped the lantern with a groan of terror.

D'Artagnan picked it up; fortunately it was not extinguished by the fall.

"Oh, monsignor, what imprudence!" said D'Artagnan; "it is always a bad thing to run about without a light; your Eminence might knock yourself against some box, or fall into some hole."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" murmured Mazarin, who could not recover from his astonishment.

"Yes, monsignor, the same; and I have the honour to present to you M. du Vallon, that excellent friend of mine, in whom your Eminence had the goodness to take such an interest formerly."

And D'Artagnan directed the light of the lamp upon the joyous visage of Porthos, who now began to understand, and felt very proud of his penetration.

"You were going to M. de la Fère's room," continued D'Artagnan. "Let us not interrupt you, monsignor; you will lead the way and we will follow you."

Mazarin gradually recovered his faculties.

"Have you been a long time in the orangery, gentlemen?" he asked, in a trembling voice, thinking of the visit that he had just made to his treasure.

Porthos opened his mouth to reply, but D'Artagnan made him a sign, and Porthos became mute, and his mouth gradually closed again.

"We are this moment arrived, monsignor," said D'Artagnan.

Mazarin breathed again. He had no further fears about his treasure: he only feared for himself. A kind of smile passed across his lips.

"Come," said he, "you have caught me in a trap, gentlemen, and I confess myself vanquished. You want to reclaim your liberty, do you not? I grant it you."

"Oh, monsignor, you are exceedingly good; but as for our liberty, we have it already, and we should prefer asking you for something else."

"You have got your liberty!" said Mazarin, quite astounded.

"Certainly; and, on the other hand, you, monsignor, have lost yours. What would you have, monsignor? It is the fortune of war. You must purchase it."

Mazarin shuddered to the very bottom of his heart. His piercing eye was in vain fixed upon the Gascon's mocking eyes, and on Porthos's imperturbable face. Both were shrouded in darkness, and the sibyl of Cumæ herself could not have read them.

"Purchase my liberty!" repeated Mazarin.

"Yes, monsignor."

"And how much will it cost me, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Forsooth, your Excellence, I do not know as yet. We will ask the Comte de la Fère, if your Eminence will allow us. Will your Eminence therefore deign to open the door that leads to his apartment, and it will be settled in ten minutes."

Mazarin trembled.

"Monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "your Eminence perceives how ceremonious we are; but yet we are obliged to tell you that we have no time to lose. Open, therefore, monsignor, if you please; and remember, once for all, that the least movement that you make to fly, or the least cry that you utter with a view to escape, our position being altogether peculiar, you must not be angry with us if we should be driven to extremities."

"Be perfectly easy, gentlemen," replied Mazarin; "I shall make no attempt whatever, I give you my word of honour."

D'Artagnan made Porthos a sign to redouble his vigilance. Then addressing Mazarin:

"Now, monsignor, let us go in if you please."

CHAPTER XCII.

CONFERENCES.

Mazarin unlocked a double door, on the threshold of which stood Athos, ready to receive his illustrious visitor, according to the information given him by Comminges.

On seeing Mazarin he bowed.

"Your Eminence may dispense with your attendants," said he; "the honour I receive is too great to be forgotten by me."

"And that is the reason, my dear Count," said D'Artagnan,

"that his Eminence did not absolutely wish for us. But Du Vallon and myself insisted upon it (although, perhaps, in an unwelcome way), so great a desire had we to see you."

At that voice, at that tone of raillery, at that well-known gesture accompanying the tone and voice, Athos started with surprise.

"D'Artagnan! Porthos!" he exclaimed.

"In person, my dear friend."

"In person," repeated Porthos.

"What does all this mean?" asked the Count.

"It means," said Mazarin, trying to smile as he had done before, and biting his lips while he smiled, — "it means that our characters are changed, and that, instead of these gentlemen being my prisoners, I am the prisoner of these gentlemen; so much so that you see me obliged to receive the law, instead of giving it. But, gentlemen, I warn you that unless you cut my throat, your victory will be of short duration. I shall have my turn; they will come" —

"Ah! monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "do not threaten; the example is bad. We are so gentle and so affable with your Eminence! Come, let us lay aside all ill-humor; let us remove all rancour and talk calmly."

"I ask for nothing more, gentlemen," replied Mazarin. "But even while we are discussing my ransom, I do not wish you to consider your position as better than it is. In taking me in a snare, you have caught yourselves along with me. How will you get out of this place? Look at the gates — look at the doors; see, or rather guess, the number of sentinels who keep guard behind these gates and doors, the soldiers that actually cumber these courts, and let us come to some agreement. Now, mark: I will show you that I am sincere."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan. "We must take care: he is going to play us some trick."

"I offered you your liberty," continued the Minister: "I offer it you again. Do you wish for it? Before an hour you will be discovered, arrested, obliged to kill me; and that would be a horrible crime, and totally unworthy of such trusty gentlemen as you are."

"He is right," thought Athos.

And like every act of reasoning that took place in that soul, from which nothing but noble thoughts could emanate, his thought was reflected in his eyes.

"Therefore," said D'Artagnan, to temper the hope which Athos's tacit adhesion had given Mazarin, "let us not resort to violence, except at the last extremity."

"If, on the other hand," continued Mazarin, "you allow me to go, on accepting your liberty" —

"What!" interrupted D'Artagnan; "do you wish us to accept our liberty, since you can take it from us, as you say yourself, in five minutes after you have given it to us? And," continued D'Artagnan, "I know you well enough, monsignor, to be sure that you would take it from us."

"No, by the faith of a cardinal — do you not believe me?"

"Monsignor, I do not believe cardinals who are not priests."

"Well, then, by my faith as a minister!"

"You are so no longer, monsignor: you are a prisoner."

"Then, by the faith of Mazarin! I am and always shall be Mazarin, I hope."

"Hum!" said D'Artagnan. "I have heard of a Mazarin who had but little respect for his oaths, and I fear that it must have been one of your Eminence's ancestors."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you have much wit, and I am exceedingly sorry to be at odds with you."

"Monsignor, let us make it up; I wish for nothing better."

"Well, then," said Mazarin, "if I place you in security, in a plain and palpable manner" —

"Ah! that is another thing," said Porthos.

"Let us see," said Athos and D'Artagnan.

"In the first place, will you accept it?" asked the Cardinal.

"Explain your plan, monsignor, and we will see."

"Remember that you are shut up, caught."

"You know very well, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "that there is a last resource."

"What is it?"

"Of dying together."

Mazarin shuddered.

"Listen," said he. "At the end of the corridor there is a door, of which I have the key; that door leads into the park. Take this key and go. You are quick, you are vigorous, you are armed. At the end of a hundred paces, turning to the left, you will come upon the park wall; you will climb over it, *and, in three* steps, you will be in the road and free. And I

now know you well enough to be certain that should you be attacked it will be no obstacle in your way."

"Ah, pardieu! monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "this is something like! You speak to the purpose. Where is this key that you would offer us?"

"Here it is."

"Ah, monsignor, will you yourself conduct us to that door?"

"Very willingly," replied the Minister, "if you need it to make your minds easy."

Mazarin, who did not expect to get off so cheaply, went to the corridor, radiant with joy, and opened the door.

It gave into the park, as the three fugitives perceived by the night air that rushed into the corridor and blew the snow into their faces.

"Diable! Diable!" said D'Artagnan, "it is a horrible night, monsignor. We know nothing of the localities, and shall never find our way. Since your Eminence has condescended so much as to come thus far, come with us a few steps farther, monsignor, and conduct us to the wall."

"So be it," said the Cardinal.

And making a straight cut, he walked rapidly toward the wall, at the foot of which they all four arrived in a very short time.

"Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" demanded Mazarin.

"I should think so, indeed, or we should be very difficult to please. Peste! what an honour! Three poor gentlemen escorted by a prince of the Church! Ah, by the way, monsignor, you said just now that we were brave, active, and armed?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken; only M. du Vallon and myself are armed; M. le Comte is not so; and if we should meet any patrol, we ought to be able to defend ourselves."

"It is very true."

"But where shall we find a sword?" demanded Porthos.

"Monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "will lend the Count his own, which is useless to him."

"Very willingly," said the Cardinal; "I shall even beg Monsieur le Comte to keep it as a memorial of me."

"Well, indeed, that is gallant, Count!" said D'Artagnan.

"Therefore," replied Athos, "I promise monsignor never to part with it."

"Very well," said D'Artagnan; "an exchange of tokens; how truly affecting! Porthos, have you not tears in your eyes?"

"Yes," replied Porthos; "but I do not know whether it is from that, or whether it is the wind that makes me cry. I fancy it is the wind."

"Now up with you, Athos," said D'Artagnan, "and be quick."

Athos, aided by Porthos, who raised him like a feather, reached the top of the wall.

"Now jump, Athos."

Athos jumped, and disappeared on the other side of the wall.

"Are you landed?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"Without accident?"

"Perfectly safe and sound."

"Porthos, watch the Cardinal while I get up. No, I do not require you; I can climb very well alone. Keep a good watch over the Cardinal; that is all."

"I am keeping a good lookout," said Porthos. "Well, now" —

"You are right; it is more difficult than I imagined. Lend me your back, but without leaving hold of the Cardinal."

"I do not leave my hold of him."

Porthos gave his back to D'Artagnan, who in an instant, thanks to that support, was seated astride on the crown of the wall.

Mazarin pretended to laugh.

"Are you there?" asked Porthos.

"Yes, my friend. And now" —

"What next?"

"Now hand me up Monsieur le Cardinal, and at the slightest cry that he utters, choke him."

Mazarin wished to call out, but Porthos squeezed him with both his hands, and raised him within reach of D'Artagnan, who, in his turn, seized him by the collar and seated him close to himself. Then, in a menacing tone:

"Sir," said he, "jump down directly to M. de la Fère, or I will kill you, on the faith of a gentleman!"

"Monsou! monsou!" cried Mazarin, "you do not keep your *promise.*"

"I? When did I promise you anything, monsignor?"

Mazarin groaned. "You are free through me, sir; your berty is my ransom."

"Agreed. But the ransom of that enormous treasure buried ı the gallery, to go down to which you must push a spring ɔncealed in the wall, which makes a box turn, by which a ;aircase is discovered, — say, must we not talk a little about ıat, monsignor?"

"*Jésous!*" said Mazarin, almost inarticulate and clasping is hands, "*Jésous, mon Diou!* I am a lost man!"

But without being hindered by his lamentations, D'Artagnan ɔok him underneath his arms, and let him gently glide into ıe arms of Athos, who had remained motionless at the bottom f the wall.

Then turning to Porthos:

"Take my hand," said D'Artagnan; "I will cling to the all."

Porthos made an effort that shook the wall, and reached the ɔp. "I did not quite understand it all," said he, "but now I o; it is very droll."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan; "so much the better. ;ut that it may be droll to the end, let us lose no time." And e jumped off the wall.

Porthos did the same.

"Accompany Monsieur le Cardinal," said D'Artagnan; "I ıust explore the ground."

The Gascon drew his sword and marched as an advanced uard.

"Monsignor," said he, "which way must we turn to gain ıe highway? Reflect well before you answer; for if your ;xcellence should be mistaken, it might produce serious in-ɔnvenience, not only to ourselves, but to you."

"Go along the wall, sir," replied Mazarin, "and you run no isk of being lost."

The three friends doubled their pace; but in a short time ıey were compelled to moderate it, as the Cardinal, although e did his best, could not keep up with them.

Suddenly D'Artagnan ran against something warm that ıoved.

"Hold! A horse!" cried he; "I have just found a horse, entlemen."

"And so have I," said Athos.

"And so have I," repeated Porthos, who, faithful to his orders, still held the Cardinal by the arm.

"This is what I call luck, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "and just at the very moment, too, that your Excellence was complaining of being obliged to go on foot" —

But at the moment that he was uttering these words, the barrel of a pistol was levelled at his breast, and he heard this warning pronounced with the greatest gravity :

"Do not touch them!"

"Grimaud!" he exclaimed. "Grimaud! What are you doing here? Are you sent from heaven?"

"No, sir," replied the honest servant; "M. Aramis told me to guard the horses."

"Is Aramis here, then?"

"Yes, sir, and since yesterday."

"And what are you doing?"

"We are watching."

"What, is Aramis here?" repeated Athos.

"At the little door of the château; that was his post."

"Are there many of you?"

"There are sixty of us."

"Go and apprise them."

"This instant, sir."

And thinking that no one could perform the commission better than himself, Grimaud set off as hard as he could run; while, overjoyed at being reunited, the three friends waited for him.

M. Mazarin was the only one in the group who was in a bad humour.

CHAPTER XCIII.

WHEREIN IT BEGINS TO BE CREDIBLE THAT PORTHOS MAY AT LAST BECOME A BARON AND D'ARTAGNAN A CAPTAIN.

At the end of ten minutes Aramis arrived, accompanied by Grimaud and eight or ten gentlemen. He was radiant with delight, and threw himself on the necks of his friends.

"So you are free, my brothers, — free without my assistance? I shall therefore have nothing to do for you, after all *my efforts*."

"Do not be unhappy about that, my dear friend. What is only deferred is not lost. If you have not been able to do any, you will very soon have the chance."

"And yet I had taken my measures well," said Aramis. "I obtained sixty men from the coadjutor; twenty guard the park walls, twenty the road from Rueil to Saint Germain, and twenty are scattered about the wood. I have, thanks to these strategic measures, intercepted two couriers from Mazarin to the Queen."

Mazarin pricked up his ears.

"But," said D'Artagnan, "I hope that you honourably sent them back to the Cardinal?"

"Ah! yes, indeed! Most likely I should take pride in showing him such delicacy! In one of his despatches the Cardinal assures the Queen that the coffers are empty, and that her Majesty has no more money. In the other he announces that he is going to transport his prisoners to Melun, as Rueil did not appear to him to be sufficiently secure. You understand, my dear friend, that this last letter gave me great hopes. I lay in ambush with my sixty men, I surrounded the château, I prepared some saddle horses, which I put under the care of the intelligent Grimaud, and waited for your coming out. I did not much expect you before to-morrow morning, and had no hopes of delivering you without a skirmish. You are free this evening — free without a struggle; so much the better. But how did you escape from that rascal Mazarin? You must have had much to complain of him?"

"Not a great deal," replied D'Artagnan.

"Really!"

"Nay, I will say more: we have even had cause to praise him."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, really and truly; thanks to him we are free."

"Thanks to him?"

"Yes; he made M. Bernouin, his *valet-de-chambre*, conduct us into the orangery; then, from there, we followed him to the Comte de la Fère's room; then he offered to grant us our liberty; we accepted it; and he even pushed his complaisance and politeness so far as to show us the way, and to conduct us to the park wall, which we had just most happily escaladed when we met with Grimaud."

"Ah! well now, this will quite reconcile me to him," said

Aramis; "and I wish he were here that I might tell him that I did not consider him capable of such a noble action."

"Monsignor," said D'Artagnan, unable to restrain himself any longer, "allow me to introduce to you the Chevalier d'Herblay, who wishes, as you may have heard, to offer his most respectful congratulations to your Eminence."

And he stepped on one side, thereby displaying the confused Cardinal to Aramis's wondering eyes.

"Oho!" he cried, "the Cardinal! What a glorious prize! Holà, holà, my friends! The horses — the horses!"

Some horsemen rode up.

"Pardieu!" said Aramis, "then I shall still have been of some use. Monsignor, will your Eminence deign to receive my most profound homage? I would wager that it is our St. Christopher of a Porthos who made this additional stroke! By the way, I was forgetting" —

And he gave an order to a horseman, in a low voice.

"I think it would be prudent to start," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, but I am waiting for some one — a friend of Athos's."

"A friend?" said the Count.

"And see there he comes galloping through the bushes."

"Monsieur le Comte! Monsieur le Comte!" cried a youthful voice that made Athos tremble.

"Raoul! Raoul!" he exclaimed.

For an instant the young man forgot his habitual respect; he threw himself on his father's neck.

"Behold, Monsieur le Cardinal! would it not have been a pity to separate men who love one another as much as we do? Gentlemen," continued Aramis, addressing the horsemen, who every moment became more numerous, — "gentlemen, surround his Eminence to do him honour; he much wishes to grant us the favour of his company, and you will, I hope, be sufficiently grateful for it. Porthos, do not lose sight of his Eminence."

And Aramis went to D'Artagnan and Athos, who were consulting, and joined in the consultation.

"Come," said D'Artagnan, after a conference of a few minutes, "let us proceed."

"And where are we going?" asked Porthos.

"To your house, my dear friend, — to Pierrefonds. Your beautiful château is worthy of offering its lordly hospitality *to his Eminence*; and it is, moreover, excellently situated —

neither too near Paris, nor too far from it. We can, from there, easily establish a communication with the capital. Come, monsignor, you will there be entertained like a prince, as you are."

"A fallen prince," said Mazarin, in a most dolorous voice.

"The chance of war, monsignor," replied Athos; "but rest assured that we will not abuse it."

"No; but we will use it," said D'Artagnan.

All the rest of the night the captors rode with the indefatigable activity of other days. Mazarin, gloomy and pensive, allowed himself to be dragged along in the midst of this career of spectres.

By daybreak they had gone twelve leagues in a single stage. The half of the escort were knocked up, and some horses fell.

"The horses of the present day are not like those of former times," said Porthos. "Everything degenerates."

"I have sent Grimaud forward to Dammartin," said Aramis. "He is to bring us five fresh horses — one for his Eminence and four for ourselves; the main thing is not to leave his Eminence. The rest of the escort will rejoin us later. When we have once passed Saint Denis, we shall have nothing more to fear."

Grimaud brought back five horses. The nobleman to whom he had applied, being one of Porthos's friends, had shown the greatest alacrity, not to sell, as it had been proposed to him, but to make an offer of them. In ten minutes more the escort halted at Ermenonville; but the four friends rode on with fresh ardour, escorting M. de Mazarin.

At noon they entered the avenue of Porthos's château.

"Ah!" said Mousqueton, whose place was near D'Artagnan, and who had not uttered a single word throughout the whole journey, — "Ah! you will believe what you please, sir, but I protest that this is the first time that I have breathed freely since my departure from Pierrefonds."

And he put his horse to a gallop, to announce to the household the arrival of M. du Vallon and his friends.

"There are four of us," said D'Artagnan to his friends; "we will take turns in guarding monsignor, and each of us will remain on guard for three hours. Athos shall inspect the château, as we must make it impregnable, in case of a siege; Porthos shall look to the victualling of the garrison, and

Aramis to the arrival of troops. That is to say, Athos shall be chief engineer, Porthos commissary-general, and Aramis the governor of the place."

In the meantime they installed Mazarin in the best apartment of the château.

"Gentlemen," said he, when this installation had been made, "you do not calculate, I presume, on keeping me long here *incognito?*"

"No, monsignor," replied D'Artagnan; "on the contrary, we mean quickly to declare publicly that we have you in our possession."

"Then you will be besieged."

"We expect so."

"And what will you do?"

"We shall defend ourselves. If the late Cardinal de Richelieu were alive, he would recount to you a certain story of a bastion called Saint Gervais, which we four, with our four lacqueys and a dozen dead men, held against a whole army."

"Such acts of prowess only take place once, sir; they are never repeated."

"But this time we shall have no occasion for being so heroic. To-morrow the Parisian army will receive information, and on the following day it will be here. The battle, instead of being fought at Saint Denis or Charenton, will then be fought near Compiègne or Villers-Cotterets."

"Monsieur le Prince will beat you, as he has always done."

"It is possible, monsignor; but before the battle, we will pass your Eminence on to another château belonging to our friend Du Vallon, who has three like this. We do not wish to expose your Eminence to the hazards of war."

"Come," said Mazarin, "I perceive that I must capitulate."

"Before the siege?"

"Yes; the conditions will perhaps be more favorable."

"Ah, monsignor! You will see how reasonable we are about conditions."

"Well, then, let us see what these conditions are?"

"Rest a little first, monsignor, and we will go and consider about it."

"I have no need of rest, gentlemen. I need to know whether I am in the hands of friends or enemies."

"Friends! your Excellence, friends!"

"*Well, then,* tell me at once what you want, that I may see

whether an arrangement be possible between us. Speak, Monsieur le Comte de la Fère."

"Monsignor, I have nothing to ask for myself, and I should have too much to demand for France. I therefore waive my own pretensions. Pass on to the Chevalier d'Herblay."

And Athos bowed, stepped back, and remained leaning against the mantelpiece, as a simple spectator of the conference.

"Speak, then, Chevalier d'Herblay," said the Cardinal. "What do you desire? No preambles — no ambiguities. Be distinct, brief, and explicit."

"I will play with all my cards on the table."

"Let us see you play, then."

"I have in my pocket," said Aramis, "the schedule of the conditions demanded by the deputation which came from Paris yesterday, and of which I was a member. Respect, forthwith, the ancient right; the demands which are contained in this schedule must be granted."

"We had nearly come to an agreement upon them," said Mazarin; "let us then pass on to private conditions."

"You think, then, that there will be some?" said Aramis, smiling.

"I think that you will not all have the same disinterestedness as Monsieur Comte de la Fère," said Mazarin, turning to Athos and bowing to him.

"Ah, monsignor, you are right," said Aramis; "and I am happy to find that you at last render justice to the Count. Monsieur le Comte de la Fère is a superior being, who soars above vulgar desires and human passions; he is an antique and haughty soul. The Count is no common man; he stands alone. You are right, monsignor; we are not his equals, and we are the first to agree with you on that point."

"Aramis," said Athos, "are you jeering me?"

"No, my dear Count, no; I only say what we think, and what all who know you also think. But you are right: you are not now the subject of discussion, but monsignor and his unworthy servant the Chevalier d'Herblay."

"Well then, sir, what do you wish, independent of those general conditions to which we will return hereafter?"

"I wish, monsignor, that Normandy should be given to Madame de Longueville, with entire and full absolution, and five hundred thousand livres. I desire that the King should

stand godfather to the son to which she has just given birth: and then that you, monsignor, after having assisted at the baptism of the child, should go and pay your respects to our Holy Father the Pope."

"That is to say, that you wish me to abdicate my functions as a minister — to leave France — in fact, to go into banishment."

"I wish monsignor to become Pope on the first vacancy, reserving the power of then demanding plenary indulgences for myself and my friends."

Mazarin made an indescribable grimace.

"And you, sir?" said he to D'Artagnan.

"I monsignor? I altogether agree with the Chevalier d'Herblay," said the Gascon, "except on the last article, on which I entirely dissent from him. Far from wishing that monsignor should leave France, I wish you to remain in Paris; far from wishing you to become Pope, I wish you to remain Prime Minister, for monsignor is a great politician. I will even endeavour, as far as depends on my own exertions, that you shall get the better of the entire Fronde; but on condition that you remember a little the King's faithful friends, and that you give the first company in the Musketeers to a certain person whom I shall name. And now you, M. du Vallon?"

"Yes, it is your turn, sir," said Mazarin. "Speak."

"I," said Porthos — "I wish that the Cardinal, in honour of my house that has given him an asylum, would erect my estate into a barony, with the promise of an order for one of my friends, on the first promotion that his Majesty shall make."

"You know, sir, that to receive the order it is necessary to give proofs of nobility."

"That friend shall give them. Besides, if it should be absolutely necessary, monsignor could tell him how this formality may be avoided."

Mazarin bit his lips. The blow was direct; and he answered dryly enough.

"All this amalgamates badly enough, it appears to me; for if I satisfy one, I must necessarily displease the other. If I remain at Paris, I cannot go to Rome; if I become Pope, I cannot remain Minister; if I am not Minister, I cannot make D'Artagnan a captain or M. du Vallon a baron."

"It is true," said Aramis. "Therefore, as I am in the mi-

nority, I withdraw my proposition regarding monsignor's journey to Rome and his abdication of the ministry."

"So then do I remain Minister?" asked Mazarin.

"You remain Minister — that is understood, monsignor," said D'Artagnan; "France has need of you."

"And I withdraw my proposals, and his Eminence shall remain Prime Minister, and even the favorite of her Majesty, if she will grant to me and my friends what we demand for France and for ourselves."

"Occupy yourselves about your own affairs, gentlemen, and leave France to agree with me as she can," said Mazarin.

"No, no!" replied Aramis. "It is absolutely necessary to treat with the Fronde; and your Eminence must write down and sign a treaty in our presence; at the same time engaging, by this treaty, to obtain its ratification by the Queen."

"I can answer only for myself," said Mazarin; "I cannot answer for the Queen. And should her Majesty refuse?"

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "monsignor knows well enough that her Majesty can refuse him nothing."

"Here, monsignor," said Aramis, "is the treaty proposed by the deputation from the Frondeurs. Will your Eminence please to read and examine it?"

"I know it," said Mazarin.

"Then sign it."

"Reflect, gentlemen, that a signature given under such circumstances as we are now placed in might be considered as exacted from me by violence."

"Monsignor will be there to say that it was given voluntarily."

"But, after all, supposing I should refuse?"

"Then, monsignor," said D'Artagnan, "your Eminence could only blame yourself for the consequences of a refusal."

"Would you dare to lay hands on a cardinal?"

"Monsignor has not hesitated to lay hands on her Majesty's Musketeers!"

"The Queen will avenge me, gentlemen."

"I do not believe she will, although it is probable she may much wish it; but we will go to Paris with your Eminence, and the Parisians are the sort of people to defend us."

"How anxious they must now be at Rueil and St. Germain!" said Aramis; "they must be inquiring: Where is the Cardinal? What has become of the Minister? Where is

the favourite gone? How they must be looking for monsignor in all the holes and corners! What remarks they must be making! And if the Fronde should only hear of monsignor's disappearance, how it will triumph!"

"It is quite frightful!" murmured Mazarin.

"Sign the treaty, then, monsignor," said Aramis.

"But if I sign and the Queen should refuse to ratify it?"

"I undertake to go to her Majesty," said D'Artagnan, "and to obtain her signature."

"Take care," said Mazarin, "lest you do not receive such a reception at Saint Germain as you think you have a right to expect."

"Ah, bah!" said D'Artagnan, "I will manage it so as to be welcome. I know a method."

"What is that?"

"I will carry to her Majesty a letter in which monsignor announces the complete exhaustion of the finances."

"And then?" said Mazarin, turning pale.

"Then, when her Majesty's embarrassment is at its greatest height, I will take her to Rueil, lead her to the orangery, and point out to her a certain spring that moves an orange-box" —

"Enough, sir," murmured the Cardinal — "enough! Where is the treaty?"

"Here it is," replied Aramis.

"You see that we are generous," said D'Artagnan; "for we might have done many things with such a secret."

"Sign, then," said Aramis, offering him the pen.

Mazarin rose up, and walked up and down for a few moments, more thoughtful than depressed. Then suddenly stopping:

"And when I have signed, gentlemen, what is to be my security?"

"My word of honour, sir," replied Athos.

Mazarin started, turned to the Comte de la Fère, examined for one moment his noble and loyal face, and taking the pen —

"That is sufficient for me, Monsieur le Comte," said he.

And he signed.

"And now, M. d'Artagnan," he added, "prepare to depart for Saint Germain, to carry a letter from me to the Queen."

CHAPTER XCIV.

HOW A THING MAY BE BETTER AND MORE SPEEDILY ACCOMPLISHED BY THE PEN AND A THREAT THAN BY THE SWORD AND DEVOTION.

D'ARTAGNAN knew his mythology: he knew that opportunity has but one tuft of hair by which she can be laid hold of, and he was not the man to let her pass by without seizing her by the forelock. He organized a plan for a prompt and secure journey, by sending forward a relay of horses to Chantilly, so that he might be in Paris in five or six hours. But before he set off he reflected that, for a man of talent and experience, it was a singular position to go forward toward an uncertainty, leaving a certainty behind him.

"In fact," he said to himself, just before mounting his horse to depart on his dangerous mission, "Athos is a hero of romance for generosity; Porthos has an excellent disposition, but is easily influenced; while Aramis has an hieroglyphic countenance — that is to say, always unreadable. What will these three elements produce, when I am no longer here to unite them? The Cardinal's deliverance, perhaps. Now, the Cardinal's deliverance would be the ruin of our hopes; and our hopes are, at present, the only recompense of twenty years' labours, in comparison with which those of Hercules were the works of pigmies.

He went to Aramis.

"You are yourself, alone, my dear Chevalier," said he to him, "the Fronde incarnate. Distrust Athos, therefore, who will do no man's business, not even his own. But, more than all, distrust Porthos, who considers Athos as a god on earth, and will aid him to promote Mazarin's escape, provided that Mazarin has only the talent to weep or to play the chivalrous."

Aramis smiled craftily, but at the same time resolutely.

"Do not be afraid," said he; "I have my own conditions to make. I am not working for myself, but for others; and it is necessary that my little ambition should lead to the advantage of the person to whom it rightfully belongs."

"Good!" thought D'Artagnan. "On this side I am easy enough."

He pressed Aramis's hand and went to find Porthos.

"My friend," said he to him, "you have worked so hard with me to build up our fortune that, at the moment when we are about to reap the fruits of our labours, it would be perfectly ridiculous to allow yourself to be governed by Aramis, whose cunning you know — a cunning that, between ourselves, is not always exempt from selfishness; or Athos, a man noble and disinterested, but also *blasé*, who, no longer desiring anything for himself, cannot understand that others should have any desires. What would you say, should either of our friends propose to you to let Mazarin escape?"

"Why, I should say that we have had too much trouble in taking him to let him go in that manner."

"Bravo, Porthos! And you would be right, my friend: for with him you would lose your barony, which you actually hold within your grasp, without reckoning that, once escaped from this place, Mazarin would have you hanged."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then I would kill him sooner than let him escape."

"And you would be perfectly right. There was no doubt, you must remember, that when we were transacting our own affairs we were also transacting those of the Fronde and the Frondeurs, who do not understand political questions as we do, who are old soldiers."

"Do not be afraid, my dear friend," said Porthos; "I shall see you mount your horse from the window, and I shall follow you with my eyes until you have disappeared. Then I shall return and take my place near the Cardinal, at a glass door looking into his room. From there I shall see everything and at the slightest suspicious action I will exterminate him."

"Bravo!" thought D'Artagnan. "In this quarter I believe that the Cardinal will be well guarded."

He pressed the hand of the Lord of Pierrefonds and went in quest of Athos.

"My dear Athos," said he, "I am now going. I have only one thing to say to you. You know Anne of Austria. Mazarin's captivity is the sole guarantee for my life. Should you permit him to escape, I am a dead man."

"Nothing less than such a consideration, my dear D'Artagnan, was necessary to determine me to undertake the office of

a jailer. I give you my word that you shall find the Cardinal where you leave him."

"There is something that gives me greater confidence than all the royal signatures," thought D'Artagnan. "Now that I have Athos's word I may depart."

D'Artagnan set off quite alone, with no other escort than his own sword and the simple passport of the Cardinal to the Queen's presence.

In six hours after leaving Pierrefonds he was at Saint Germain.

Mazarin's disappearance was as yet unknown: Anne of Austria was alone aware of it, and concealed her anxiety even from her most intimate friends. The two soldiers had been found, gagged and pinioned, in D'Artagnan's and Porthos's room. The use of their limbs and their tongues had been immediately restored to them; but they had no more to tell than what they knew — that is, how they had been fished up, bound, and stripped. But as to what D'Artagnan and Porthos had done after they had slipped through the opening where the soldiers were taken in, they were as ignorant as the other inhabitants of the château.

Bernouin alone knew a little more than the others. Bernouin, finding that his master did not return, and hearing it strike twelve o'clock, had taken it upon himself to make his way into the orangery. The first door, barricaded with the furniture, had at once aroused suspicions; but yet he did not wish to impart these suspicions to any one, and had patiently forced his way through the midst of all this confusion. Then he reached the corridor, all the doors of which he found open. It was the same with those of Athos's apartment and the park door. Having reached the latter, it was easy to follow the footsteps through the snow; he saw that these steps terminated at the wall; on the other side he discovered the same tracks, then the horses' footmarks, and finally the vestiges of a complete troop of cavalry, that had gone off in the direction of Enghien. From that moment he had not the slightest doubt that the Cardinal had been carried off by the three prisoners, since they had disappeared with him; and he had hastened to Saint Germain to inform the Queen of his disappearance.

Anne of Austria had enjoined silence, and Bernouin had scrupulously observed it. She had, however, sent for M. le

Prince, to whom she told everything, and he immediately sent out five or six hundred horsemen, with orders to scour all the environs, and to bring back to Saint Germain any suspicious troop of horsemen who might be found going from Rueil in any direction.

Now, as D'Artagnan, being alone, did not form a troop, and as he was not going from Rueil, but was proceeding to Saint Germain, no one took any notice of him, and his journey was not at all interrupted.

On entering the court of the old château, the first person whom our ambassador saw was Master Bernouin in person, standing on the threshold and waiting for news of his lost master. On beholding D'Artagnan riding into the court of honour, Bernouin rubbed his eyes and imagined he must be mistaken. But D'Artagnan gave him a little friendly nod, jumped off his horse, threw the bridle over the arm of a lacquey who was passing, and went up to the *valet-de-chambre*, whom he accosted with a smile on his lips.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, just like a man who has the nightmare and who talks in his sleep, — "Monsieur D'Artagnan!"

"Himself, Monsieur Bernouin."

"And what are you come here for?"

"To bring you news of M. de Mazarin, and very recent news, too."

"And what has become of him?"

"He is as well as either you or I are."

"No misfortune, then, has befallen him?"

"None whatever. He was only obliged to make an expedition into the Isle of France, and he requested the Comte de la Fère, M. du Vallon, and myself to accompany him. We were too much devoted to him to refuse such a request. We set off last night; and now here I am" —

"Here you are?"

"His Eminence had a message to send to her Majesty — something most secret and confidential — a mission that could only be confided to a trustworthy man — so that he despatched me to Saint Germain. So then, my dear Monsieur Bernouin, if you wish to do something that would be most agreeable to your master, inform her Majesty of my arrival and tell her why."

Whether he spoke seriously or was jesting, as it was evident

that D'Artagnan was, under the present circumstances, the only man who could relieve Anne of Austria from anxiety, Bernouin did not object to apprise her of this singular embassy; and, as D'Artagnan had foreseen, the Queen ordered him to be introduced instantaneously.

D'Artagnan approached the Queen with every mark of the most profound respect.

When he was three steps from her, he knelt and presented the letter. It was, as we have said, a mere letter of introduction and of credence. The Queen read it, recognised the Cardinal's writing, although it was somewhat shaky, and as this letter told her nothing that had transpired, she demanded the particulars.

D'Artagnan recounted everything with that air of innocent simplicity which he knew so well how to assume under certain circumstances.

The Queen, as he proceeded, regarded him with increasing astonishment. She could not comprehend how any man would dare to conceive such an enterprise, much less that he would have the audacity to recount it to her, whose interest, if not her positive duty, it was to punish it.

"What, sir!" when D'Artagnan had terminated his recital, exclaimed the Queen, colouring with indignation,—"you dare to avow your crime — to recount to me your treason!"

"Pardon me, madame; but it seems to me that I have either explained myself imperfectly, or your Majesty has misunderstood me. There is neither crime nor treason in all this. M. de Mazarin kept M. du Vallon and myself in prison because we could not believe that he had sent us to England quietly to see them cut off the head of Charles I., the brother-in-law of the late King, your husband, and the husband of Madame Henrietta, your sister and guest; and because we did all we could to save the life of the royal martyr. We were, therefore, convinced that there must be some mistake, of which we were the victims, and that an explanation between ourselves and his Eminence was necessary. Now, that an explanation may be productive of benefit it is necessary that it should be made quietly, far from disturbance and interruption. So we conducted the Cardinal to my friend's château, and there we did come to an explanation. Well, madame, what we had imagined proved to be really the case: there had been a mistake. M. Mazarin thought that we had served M. Cromwell

instead of Charles I., which would have been a disgrace that might have reflected from us to him, and from him to your Majesty, — a base, cowardly act, that would have tainted to its root the royalty of your illustrious son. Now, we have given him proofs to the contrary; and these we are also ready to give to your Majesty herself, by calling upon the august widow who now weeps in the Louvre, where she is lodged by your royal munificence. These proofs have so completely satisfied his Eminence that, as a token of his satisfaction, he has sent me, as your Majesty may perceive, to converse with your Majesty about the reparations naturally due to gentlemen who have not been properly appreciated, but have instead been wrongfully persecuted."

"I hear you and I admire you, sir," said Anne of Austria; "for in truth I have rarely seen such an excess of impudence."

"Why," said D'Artagnan, "here is your Majesty also, who now in turn misunderstands our intentions, as M. de Mazarin did previously."

"You are yourself mistaken, sir," replied the Queen; "and I misunderstand so little that in ten minutes you will be arrested, and in an hour I shall set off to deliver my Minister at the head of my army."

"I am quite sure that your Majesty will not commit such an act of imprudence," said D'Artagnan. "In the first place, because it would be perfectly useless, and then it would produce the most serious consequences. Before he could be delivered the Cardinal would be dead; and his Eminence is so convinced of the truth of what I say that he entreated me, should I find that your Majesty entertained such intentions, to do all I could to induce you to change your resolution."

"Well, then, I will content myself with having you arrested."

"That would be equally imprudent, madame; for the contingency of my arrest is as well provided for as the Cardinal's deliverance. If I am not back by a certain hour to-morrow, on the following day the Cardinal will be conducted to Paris."

"It is evident, sir, that you live far away from men and affairs; for otherwise you would know that since we left Paris the Cardinal has been there five or six times; and that he there saw M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, M. de Coadjuteur, and M. d'Elbeuf, not one of whom had any idea of arresting *him.*"

"Pardon me, madame, I know all this. Therefore our friends, seeing that these gentlemen are making war for their own interested purposes, and that by granting their several demands the Cardinal would get off cheaply, will conduct his Eminence not to M. de Beaufort or to M. de Bouillon, to the coadjutor or to M. d'Elbeuf, but to the Parliament, which might possibly be bought in detail, but which M. Mazarin himself is not rich enough to buy in a mass."

"I verily believe," said Anne of Austria, regarding him with a look which, disdainful in a woman, became terrible in a queen, — "I verily believe that you are threatening the mother of your King!"

"Madame," replied D'Artagnan, "I threaten because I am forced to do so. I exalt myself because I am compelled to place myself on a level with events and persons. But at least believe one thing, madame, — as true as there is a heart that beats for you in this bosom, — believe that you have been the constant idol of our lives, which, as you well know, we have risked twenty times for your Majesty. Will not your Majesty, then, have pity on your servants, who for twenty years have vegetated in the shade, without permitting the sacred and solemn secrets that they shared with you to escape even in one single sigh? Look at me — at me, who am now addressing you, madame — me, whom you accuse of elevating his voice and of assuming a threatening tone. What am I? A poor officer — without fortune, without shelter, without any futurity, if the countenance of my Queen, which I have for a long time sought, be not for a moment turned toward me. Look at the Comte de la Fère — a pattern of the noblesse, the flower of chivalry; he has espoused the party opposed to his Queen, or rather not so: he took part against her Minister, and he has no demands to make, I believe. And lastly look at M. du Vallon — that faithful heart, that iron arm; he has been waiting for twenty years for one word from your Majesty's lips, that he may be made by his coat-of-arms what he is by his sentiments and his valour. In fine, regard your people, who are certainly something to a queen, — your people, who love you and yet suffer; whom you love, and who are yet starving; who ask nothing more than to bless you, and who nevertheless — No, I am wrong: your people will never curse you, madame. Well, then, say one word, and all is finished. Peace succeeds to war, joy to tears, and happiness to misery."

Anne of Austria looked with a kind of astonishment at D'Artagnan's martial countenance, on which a singular expression of emotion might be traced.

"And why did you not say all this before you proceeded to action?" she replied.

"Because, madame, it was necessary to prove one thing to your Majesty, which she seemed to doubt, — that we have still some valour left, and that it is reasonable we should be in some measure appreciated."

"And from what I see this valour would not stop at anything," said Anne of Austria.

"It has stopped at nothing in the past," replied D'Artagnan; "why then should it do otherwise in the future?"

"And this valour, in case of refusal, and consequently in the event of a struggle, would even go so far as to carry me off, my own self, from the midst of my Court, to deliver me up to the Fronde, as you wish to deliver up my Minister?"

"We have never dreamt of such a thing, madame," replied D'Artagnan, with that species of Gascon braggadocio which, with him, was merely *naïveté;* "but if we four had formed the resolution we most certainly should have executed it."

"I ought to know it," murmured Anne of Austria: "they are invincible men."

"Alas, madame!" said D'Artagnan, "this proves that we are only now, for the first time, justly appreciated by your Majesty."

"Well, then," said the Queen, "but this appreciation — should I have it at last?"

"Your Majesty will do us justice; and, in doing us justice, will no longer treat us as men of the common stamp, but will recognise in me an ambassador worthy of the great interests I am charged to discuss with you."

"Where is the treaty?"

"Here it is."

CHAPTER XCV.

HOW A THING MAY BE BETTER AND MORE SPEEDILY ACCOMPLISHED BY THE PEN AND A THREAT THAN BY THE SWORD AND DEVOTION. (*Continuation.*)

ANNE of Austria cast her eyes over the treaty, which D'Artagnan presented to her.

"I see here," said she, "only general conditions. The interests of M. de Conti, of M. de Bouillon, of M. de Beaufort, of M. d'Elbeuf, and of the coadjutor, are here respectively determined. But what of yours?"

"We do ourselves the justice, madame, of placing ourselves on our proper level. We thought that our names were not worthy of figuring near those great names."

"But you have not, I presume, renounced the right of personally explaining your pretensions to me?"

"Madame, you are a great and powerful Queen, and it would be unworthy of your greatness and power not to recompense worthily men who will bring his Eminence back to Saint Germain."

"It is my intention," said the Queen. "Therefore proceed."

"He who has negotiated this affair — I beg pardon for beginning with myself, but it is necessary that I should invest myself with the importance, not that I have assumed, but that has been given me — he who has negotiated the affair of the Cardinal's ramson ought, it appears to me — in order that the recompense may not be unworthy of your majesty — he ought to be made the Commander of the Guards, something like the Captain of the Musketeers."

"You ask of me M. de Tréville's place!"

"The place is vacant, madame. It is now a year since M. de Tréville vacated it, and it has not yet been filled."

"But it is one of the principal military offices of the King's household."

"M. de Tréville was a simple Gascon volunteer like myself, madame, and he held this appointment twenty years."

"You have an answer for everything, sir," said Anne of Austria.

And she took a commission from a desk, filled it out, and signed it.

"Assuredly, madame," said D'Artagnan, taking the commission and bowing, "this is a splendid and noble recompense; but the affairs of this world are full of instability, and a man who should fall into disgrace with your Majesty might lose this office to-morrow."

"What, then, do you wish more?" said the Queen, colouring on finding that she was encountered by an intellect as keen as her own.

"A hundred thousand livres for this poor Captain of Musketeers, payable on the day when his services shall be no longer agreeable to your Majesty."

The Queen hesitated.

"And only to think," continued D'Artagnan, "that the Parisians offered the other day, by an Act of Parliament, six hundred thousand livres to any one who should deliver the Cardinal to them dead or alive — if alive, to hang him; if dead, to drag him to the shambles."

"Come," said Anne of Austria, "that is reasonable enough, since you ask from a Queen only one-sixth of what the Parliament offered."

And she signed a promise for a hundred thousand livres.

"What next?" said she.

"Madame, my friend Du Vallon is rich, and consequently has nothing to desire on the score of fortune. But I believe that there has been a question between him and M. de Mazarin as to erecting his estate into a barony. It is, indeed, if I remember right, a promise."

"A country boor!" said Anne of Austria. "Everybody will laugh."

"So be it," said D'Artagnan. "But of one thing I am certain, that they who laugh before him will not laugh twice."

"Well, then, agreed as to the barony," said Anne of Austria. And she signed it.

"Now there is the Chevalier or the Abbé d'Herblay, whichever your Majesty pleases."

"Does he wish to be a bishop?"

"No, madame; he desires a much easier thing."

"And what is that?"

"It is that his Majesty the King would deign to stand godfather to the son of Madame de Longueville."

The Queen smiled.

"M. de Longueville is of royal extraction, madame," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes," said the Queen; "but his son?"

"His son, madame, ought to be so, since his mother's husband is."

"And has your friend nothing more to ask for Madame de Longueville?"

"No, madame; for he presumes that his Majesty the King, deigning to be godfather to her child, cannot make an offering of less than five hundred thousand livres as a churching present to the mother, at the same time reserving the government of Normandy for the father."

"As for the government of Normandy, I think I may become responsible for it," said the Queen; "but as for the five hundred thousand livres, the Cardinal is incessantly repeating that there is no more money in the State coffers."

"We will look for it together, madame, if your Majesty will allow it, and we will manage to find it."

"And then?"

"Then, madame?"

"Yes."

"That is all."

"Have you not, then, a fourth companion?"

"Yes, madame, — M. le Comte de la Fère."

"What does he ask for?"

"He asks for nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No."

"Is there a man in the world who, having the power of asking, yet asks for nothing?"

"There is M. le Comte de la Fère, madame. But M. le Comte de la Fère is not a man."

"What is he, then?"

"M. le Comte de la Fère is a demi-god."

"Has he not a son, a relation, a nephew, a young man of whom Comminges has spoken as a brave youth, and who brought the colours from Lens with M. de Châtillon?"

"He has, as your Majesty has said, a ward, who is called the Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"If a regiment were given to this young man, what would his guardian say?"

"Perhaps he might accept it."

"Perhaps?"

"Yes, if your Majesty were to request him to accept it."

"You have spoken truly, sir; he is an extraordinary man. Well, then, we will think about it, and perhaps we may request him. Are you satisfied, sir?"

"Yes, your Majesty. But there is one thing which the Queen has not signed."

"What is that?"

"It is the most important thing of all."

"The consent to the treaty?"

"Yes."

"And of what consequence is it? I can sign the treaty to-morrow."

"There is one thing that I can positively assure your Majesty," replied D'Artagnan, "which is, that if your Majesty does not sign this treaty to-day, it will be too late to do it to-morrow. I therefore entreat you to place your signature at the bottom of this form, which, as you may see, is written entirely by M. de Mazarin:

"*I consent to ratify the treaty proposed by the Parisians.*"

The Queen was caught, and could not draw back; she signed the treaty. But no sooner had she done so than her pride burst forth like a tempest, and she began to weep.

D'Artagnan started on seeing these tears. Since those days queens have wept like other women.

The Gascon shook his head. These royal tears seemed to scorch his very heart.

"Madame," said he, kneeling, "look at the unhappy gentleman now at your feet. He begs you to believe that, for him, a simple gesture from your Majesty would be all-sufficient. He has faith in himself — he has faith in his friends; he wishes also to have faith in his Queen; and to prove that he has no distrust — that he speculates on nothing — he will bring M. de Mazarin back to your Majesty without any conditions whatever. See, madame, here are your Majesty's sacred signatures. If you think that you ought to return them to me, you will do so. But from this moment they bind you to nothing."

And D'Artagnan, still on his knees, with a look resplendent with pride and manly intrepidity, gave back to Anne of Austria the whole of those papers which he had, as it were, torn from *her, one* by one, with so much difficulty.

There are moments — for if not all is good, not all is evil in this world — there are moments when, in the most arid and coldest hearts, a generous feeling, bedewed by the tears of extreme emotion, germinates, which the frigid calculations of pride would stifle did not another feeling seize upon it at its birth. This was one of those moments with Anne of Austria. D'Artagnan, by yielding to his own emotion, in harmony with the Queen's, had accomplished the work of a profound diplomacy. He was therefore instantly rewarded for his address, or his disinterestedness, according as we give credit to his talent or his heart for having prompted this proceeding.

"You were right, sir," said Anne; "I did misconceive you. Here are the acts signed, and I give them to you of my own free will. Go, and bring the Cardinal back as soon as you can."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "twenty years ago — for my memory is good — I had the honour, behind the tapestry of the Hôtel de Ville, to kiss one of those beautiful hands."

"There is the other," said the Queen; "and that the left hand may not be less liberal than the right [drawing from her finger a diamond, almost like the first], take this ring, and keep it for my sake."

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, rising, "I have only one more wish, which is, that the first thing you would demand of me should be my life."

And with that dignity and grace which he alone possessed he left the room.

"I have indeed misunderstood these men," said Anne of Austria, looking at D'Artagnan's retreating figure; "and now it is too late to make any use of them: in one year the King will attain his majority."

Fifteen hours afterwards D'Artagnan and Porthos brought Mazarin to the Queen, and received, the one the captaincy of the Musketeers, the other his diploma of Baron.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked the Queen.

D'Artagnan bowed; Porthos turned and twisted his diploma between his fingers, at the same time looking at Mazarin.

"What is the matter now?" asked the Minister.

"Why, monsignor, that there was some question about a promise of a Chevalier of the Order on the first promotion."

"But," said Mazarin, "you know that no one can be a Chevalier of the Order without establishing proofs of his nobility."

"Oh!" said Porthos, "I did not ask the blue riband for myself, monsignor."

"For whom, then?" said Mazarin.

"For my friend, M. le Comte de la Fère."

"Ah, for him!" said the Queen; "that is another thing; the proofs are established."

"And he will have it?"

"He has it."

The same day the treaty of Paris was signed; and it was everywhere proclaimed that the Cardinal had shut himself up for three days, in order to work at it with greater care.

We shall now see what each gained by this treaty.

M. de Conti had Damvilliers, and, having established his proofs as a general, obtained permission to remain a military man, and not to become a cardinal. Moreover, some words had been dropped about a marriage with Mazarin's niece; and these words had been favourably received by the Prince, it being, in his opinion, of little consequence to whom he was married, provided that he was married.

The Duc de Beaufort returned to the Court, with all the reparations due for the injuries he had received, and with all the honours to which his rank entitled him. He further obtained the unconditional pardon of all who had assisted him in his escape, the reversion of the admiralty now held by the Duc de Vendôme, his father, and an indemnity for his houses and châteaux, which the Parliament of Brittany had caused to be demolished.

The Duc de Bouillon received domains equal in value to his principality of Sedan, with indemnity for the eight years that he had not enjoyed that principality, and the title of prince granted to himself and his family.

The Duc de Longueville had the government of Pont-de-l'Arche, five hundred thousand livres for his wife, and the honour of seeing his son held at the baptismal font by the young King and the young Henrietta of England.

Aramis stipulated that Bazin should officiate at this solemnity, and that Planchet should supply the sugar-plums.

The Duc d'Elbeuf obtained the payment of certain sums due to his wife, a hundred thousand livres for his eldest son, and twenty-five thousand for each of the other three.

The coadjutor was the only person who obtained nothing. *They* promised him, it is true, to negotiate the affair of his

nat with the Pope; but he well knew what confidence he could repose in such promises, coming from the Queen and the Cardinal. Quite different from M. de Conti, not being able to become a cardinal he was obliged to remain a military man.

Therefore, when all Paris was rejoicing at the prospect of the King's return, which was set for the next day, Gondy alone, in the midst of the general gayety, was in such extreme bad humour that he immediately sent for two men whom he was in the habit of summoning when he was in that state of mind. One of these two men was the Comte de Rochefort; the other, the mendicant of Saint Eustache.

They came with their usual punctuality, and the coadjutor passed a great portion of the night with them.

CHAPTER XCVI.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT SOMETIMES IT IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR KINGS TO REËNTER THE CAPITAL OF THEIR REALM THAN TO LEAVE IT.

While D'Artagnan and Porthos were gone to conduct the Cardinal to Saint Germain, Athos and Aramis, who had left them at Saint Denis, had reëntered Paris.

Each of them had a visit to pay.

Aramis hastened to the Hôtel de Ville, where Madame de Longueville then was. At the first intelligence of the peace the beautiful Duchess uttered violent exclamations. The war was making her a queen: the peace would lead to her abdication. She declared that she would never consent, and that she wished the war to be eternal.

But when Aramis had placed this peace, with all its advantages, in its proper light — when he had shown her the viceroyalty of Pont-de-l'Arche, that is to say, of all Normandy, in lieu of the precarious and contested royalty of Paris — when he had sounded in her ears the five hundred thousand promised livres — when he had set before her eyes the dazzling perspective of the King doing her the honour to hold her child in his arms at the baptismal font, Madame de Longueville no longer resisted; at least, not more than all

pretty women are accustomed to resist, and only defended herself that she might surrender.

Aramis pretended to believe in the reality of this opposition, and did not wish to think that he owed his success to anything but his own powers of persuasion.

"Madame," said he, "you wished to beat your brother, who is the greatest captain of the age, and when women of talent form any wish they are always successful. You have succeeded. M. le Prince is beaten, since he can no longer make war. Now draw him over to our party. Detach him gently from the Queen, whom he does not love, and from M. Mazarin, whom he despises. The Fronde is a comedy, of which we have as yet played only the first act. Let us wait for M. de Mazarin at the winding-up of the plot; that is to say, on the day when the Prince, by your influence, shall be turned against the Court."

Madame de Longueville was persuaded. The *duchesse frondeuse* was so convinced of the power of her beautiful eyes that she did not doubt their influence over the Prince de Condé, and the scandalous chronicles of that time prove that she was not mistaken.

Athos, on leaving Aramis in the Place Royal, went to Madame de Chevreuse. Here was yet another *frondeuse* to persuade; but she was even less open to conviction than her young rival. There had been no condition stipulated in her favour. M. de Chevreuse had not been appointed governor of any province; and if the Queen was to consent to become godmother, it must be either to her grandson or granddaughter.

Therefore, at the first announcement of peace Madame de Chevreuse frowned, and in spite of all Athos's logic to prove the impossibility of a longer war, she insisted on the continuation of hostilities.

"My fair friend," said Athos, "allow me to tell you that every one is tired of the war, and that every one except yourself and perhaps the coadjutor is anxious for peace. You will be again exiled, as in the time of Louis XIII. Believe me, we have passed the age of successful intrigues, and your beautiful eyes are not destined to destroy themselves by weeping over Paris, where there always must be two queens while you are here."

"Oh!" said the Duchess, "I cannot carry on the war alone;

I can avenge myself on that ungrateful Queen and that
itious favourite; and on the word of a duchess, I will
ge myself!"

Madame," said Athos, "do not, I beseech you, create an
appy future for Bragelonne; he is well launched; he is
ng, and the Prince is favourably inclined to him. Let us
w the young King to establish himself. Alas! — excuse
weakness, madame, — a time comes when a man lives anew,
, as it were, grows young again in his children."

he Duchess smiled, half ironically, half tenderly.

Count," said she, "I fear that you have been gained over by
Court. Have you not some blue riband in your pocket?"

Yes, madame," replied Athos; "I have that of the Gar-
which King Charles I. gave me some days before his
th."

he Count spoke the truth; for he did not know what Por-
s had asked for, and supposed he had only that which he
mentioned.

Well, then, I must make up my mind to be an old woman,"
the Duchess, with a meditative air.

thos took her hand and kissed it. She sighed on looking
im.

Count," said she, "your mansion at Bragelonne must be
arming one. You are a man of taste; you must have
d, water, and flowers."

he sighed again, and rested her charming head on a hand
ettishly bent over, and still attractive from its form and
teness.

Madame," replied the Count, "what is it you have just
.? I never saw you looking so young or so beautiful."

he Duchess shook her head.

Is M. de Bragelonne to remain in Paris?" said she.

What do you think about it?" demanded Athos.

Leave him with me," replied the Duchess.

No, madame. If you have forgotten the history of
ipus, I have not."

Really you are quite charming, Count, and I should much
to pass a month at Bragelonne."

Are you not afraid of making me greatly envied?"
antly replied Athos.

No; I will go *incognita*, Count, under the name of Marie
hon."

"You are quite adorable, madame."

"But do not allow Raoul to remain with you."

"Why not?"

"Because he is in love."

"He — a little boy!"

"Therefore he is in love with a little girl."

Athos became thoughtful.

"You are right, Duchess. This singular love for a seven-year-old girl may one day make him very unhappy. There is to be a campaign in Flanders; he shall go there!"

"Then, on his return you shall send him to me, and I will cuirass him against love."

"Alas, madame," said Athos, "in these days love is like war, and a cuirass is become perfectly useless."

At this moment Raoul made his appearance; he came to inform the Duchess and the Count that his friend, the Comte de Guiche, had told him that the solemn entrance of the King, the Queen, and the Minister was to take place the next day.

The next morning, in fact, at daybreak, the Court made all its preparations to leave Saint Germain. On the previous evening the Queen had sent for D'Artagnan.

"Sir," said she to him, "I am assured that Paris is not quiet. I shall have some fears for the King; therefore station yourself near the right door of the carriage."

"Your Majesty may be perfectly easy," said D'Artagnan; "I will answer for the King."

And bowing to the Queen he left the room.

On leaving the Queen's apartment, Bernouin came to inform D'Artagnan that the Cardinal was waiting for him on important business.

He immediately went to his Excellence.

"Sir," said he, "they talk of a commotion in Paris. I shall be on the King's left; and as I shall be the one principally threatened, station yourself at the left door of the carriage."

"Your Eminence need not fear," replied D'Artagnan; "they shall not touch one hair of your head."

"Diable!" said he, when he had reached the ante-chamber, "how shall I get out of this dilemma? I cannot be both at the right and the left doors at the same time. Ah, bah! I will guard the King, and Porthos shall guard the Cardinal."

This arrangement satisfied every one — a rare occurrence. The Queen had great confidence in D'Artagnan's courage,

hich she well knew, and the Cardinal in Porthos's strength, hich he had felt.

The cavalcade set off for Paris in an order arranged before- and. Guitaut and Comminges, at the head of the Guards, arched in front; then came the royal carriage, having D'Arta- nan at one of its doors and Porthos at the other; then the usketeers, those old friends of D'Artagnan's, of twenty ears' standing, — their lieutenant for twenty years, their aptain the evening before.

On reaching the barrier the carriage was saluted by loud ries of "Vive le roi!" and "Vive la Reine!" Some few cries f "Vive Mazarin!" were mingled with them, but they had no hoes.

They went toward Notre-Dame, where a *Te Deum* was to be ng.

All the people of Paris were in the streets. The Swiss had en drawn up the whole length of the way; but as the dis- nce was considerable, they were only placed at six or eight ces from each other, and in a single line. This rampart was erefore wholly insufficient, and, being occasionally broken rough by a stream of people, was with great difficulty re- rmed.

At each rupture, although it was amicable and arose from e desire that the Parisians had to see their King, of whom ey had been deprived for a year, Anne of Austria looked at 'Artagnan with some anxiety, and he encouraged her by a nile.

Mazarin, who had spent about a thousand louis in making em cry "Vive Mazarin!" and who estimated the cries that e heard as not worth twenty pistoles, kept also looking at orthos with great anxiety. But the gigantic body-guard nswered this look with such a splendid bass voice — "Make ourself easy, monsignor" — that Mazarin became more and ore tranquil.

On reaching the Palais Royal they found the crowd greater an ever. The streams from all the adjacent streets had here nited, and all this vast population looked like an immense wollen river, coming to meet the carriage, and rolling tumult- ously along the Rue Saint Honoré.

When they reached the square loud cries of "Vive leurs ajestés!" resounded on every side. Three or four cries of Vive le Cardinal!" greeted his appearance; but almost

immediately hisses and hootings unmercifully smothered them. Mazarin turned pale and threw himself precipitately back in the carriage.

"*Canaille!*" muttered Porthos.

D'Artagnan said nothing, but curled his mustache with a peculiar gesture, indicating that his Gascon temper was beginning to grow warm.

Anne of Austria bent down to the young King's ear, and said to him in a low voice:

"Make some gracious motion, and address a few words to M. D'Artagnan, my son."

The young King leaned toward the window.

"I have not yet wished you good morning, Monsieur D'Artagnan," said he, "and yet I recognised you well enough. You were behind the curtains of my bed that night when the Parisians wished to see me asleep."

"And if the King permits me," said D'Artagnan, "I will always be near him whenever there is any danger to be incurred."

"Sir," said Mazarin to Porthos, "what would you do if all this rabble were to rush upon you?"

"I would kill as many as I could, monsignor," replied Porthos.

"Hum!" said Mazarin; "brave and vigorous as you are, you could not kill them all."

"That is true," replied Porthos, raising himself in his stirrups, that he might the better survey the immensity of the throng, — "it is true; there are a great many of them."

"I think that I should like the other better," said Mazarin. And he threw himself back in the carriage.

The Queen and her Minister had reason to feel some anxiety, at least the latter. The crowd, while it retained all the appearances of respect and even of affection for the King and the Regent, began to be tumultuously excited. Those dull murmurs began to pervade it, which when they come from the waters indicate a storm, and when they come from the multitude portend insurrection.

D'Artagnan turned round toward his Musketeers, and made them a sign, imperceptible to the multitude, but very intelligible to these choice troops.

The ranks of the horses closed up, and a slight murmur was heard among the men.

At the Barrière des Sergents they were obliged to halt. Comminges left the head of his escort and came to the Queen's carriage. The Queen interrogated D'Artagnan by a glance, which he answered by the same language.

"Proceed!" said the Queen.

Comminges resumed his post. An effort was made, and the living barrier was violently broken through.

Some murmurs arose amid the crowd, which were now addressed to the King as well as to the Minister.

"Forward!" cried D'Artagnan, in a loud voice.

"Forward!" repeated Porthos.

But as if the multitude had only been waiting for this demonstration to break out, all the feelings of hostility that it contained burst forth at once. The cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Death to the Cardinal!" resounded on every side.

At the same time, from the streets of Grenelle-Saint-Honorè and Du Coq a double stream rushed in, breaking through the slender line of the Swiss Guards, and came like a tumultuous whirlpool up to the very legs of D'Artagnan's and Porthos's horses.

This fresh irruption was more dangerous than the others; for it was composed of armed men, and even better armed than the people are in similar cases. It was plainly perceptible, from this last moment, that it was not the effect of chance that had thus united a certain number of the insurgents at the same point, but the combination of a hostile mind that had organized an attack.

These two masses were each conducted by a leader: one of these appeared to belong, not to the dregs of the people, but even to the honourable corporation of the mendicants; the other, in spite of his affectation of imitating the manners of the people, it was easy to discover was a gentleman.

Both evidently acted under the same impulse.

There was a violent shock, which was felt even to the royal carriage. Then thousands of cries, forming a vast clamour, were heard, interrupted by three or four shots.

"Forward, Musketeers!" cried D'Artagnan.

The escort separated into two files: one passed to the right, the other to the left of the carriage. The one came to the assistance of D'Artagnan: the other supported Porthos.

Then a skirmish commenced the more terrible as it had no definite object — the more melancholy, as it was not known for whom or what *they* were fighting.

CHAPTER XCVII.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT SOMETIMES IT IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR KINGS TO REËNTER THE CAPITAL OF THEIR REALM THAN TO LEAVE IT. (*Continuation.*)

LIKE all movements of the people, the shock of this throng was terrible. The Musketeers, few in number, badly drawn up, and unable, in the midst of such a multitude, to manœuvre their horses, began to be separated from one another.

D'Artagnan had wished the hoods of the carriage to be lowered, but the King had stretched out his arm, saying:

"No, M. d'Artagnan; I wish to see."

"Your Majesty wishes to see?" said D'Artagnan; "well, then, let him look!"

And turning, with that fury which made him so terrible, D'Artagnan made his horse bound toward the leader of the insurgents, who, a pistol in one hand and a broad sword in the other, was endeavouring to clear himself a passage, even to the carriage window, by struggling with two Musketeers.

"Give way, there!" shouted D'Artagnan. "Mordioux! give way!"

At this voice the man with the pistol and the broad sword raised his head. But it was too late: D'Artagnan's blow was given, and his rapier had passed through his breast.

"Ah! *ventre-saint-gris!*" cried D'Artagnan, too late trying to withhold the blow, "what the devil did you come here for, Count?"

"To accomplish my destiny," said Rochefort, falling on one knee. "I recovered from three of your sword-thrusts, but I shall not recover from the fourth."

"Count," said D'Artagnan, not without emotion, "I struck without knowing that it was you. I shall regret, should you die, that you left the world with feelings of hatred toward me."

Rochefort held out his hand to D'Artagnan, who took it in his. The Count would have spoken, but a gush of blood stifled his voice. He stretched himself in a last convulsion, and expired.

"Back there, ye dogs!" shouted D'Artagnan. "Your leader is dead, and you have nothing more to do here."

In fact, as if the Comte de Rochefort had been the soul of

the attack that was made on this side of the King's carriage, all the crowd that had followed and obeyed him took to flight on seeing him fall. D'Artagnan made a charge with a score of his Musketeers in the Rue du Coq, and this portion of the insurgents disappeared like smoke, scattering itself over the Place Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois, and disappearing among the quays.

D'Artagnan returned to carry assistance to Porthos, should he require it. But Porthos, on his part, had performed his work as conscientiously as D'Artagnan. The left of the carriage was as well cleared as the right, and they raised the hood on Mazarin's side, who, less warlike than the King, had lowered it.

Porthos had a very melancholy air.

"What an extremely odd face you are making there, Porthos, and what a singular air you have for a conqueror!"

"But you yourself seem much agitated, D'Artagnan," said Porthos.

"And reason enough for it, mordioux! I have just killed an old friend."

"Indeed!" said Porthos. "And who was it?"

"That poor Comte de Rochefort!"

"Well, then, that is just my case. I have this moment killed some one whose face is familiar to me; but unfortunately I struck him on the head, and in one moment his face was covered with blood."

"And did he say nothing as he fell?"

"Yes; he said, '*Ouf!*'"

"I can fancy," said D'Artagnan, not being able to restrain his laughter, "that if he did not say anything else, that could not much enlighten you on the subject."

"Well, sir?" demanded the Queen.

"Madame," said D'Artagnan, "the way is perfectly clear, and your Majesty may continue your progress."

In fact, the whole train reached Notre Dame without further accident. Under the gateway all the clergy, with the coadjutor at their head, were waiting for the King, the Queen, and the Minister, for whose happy return they were going to chant the *Te Deum*.

During the service, and when it was drawing to a close, a street gamin entered the church as if frightened out of his wits, ran to the sacristy, dressed himself hastily as a choir

boy, and, thanks to the respectable dress that he had just put on, made his way through the crowd that encumbered the temple, and went up to Bazin, who, clothed in his blue gown and with his silver-tipped verge in his hand, was standing solemnly in front of the Swiss at the entrance of the choir.

Bazin felt some one pull him by the sleeve. He bent to earth his eyes, that were raised heavenward in a sanctified manner, and recognized Friquet.

"Well, you young rascal, what is the matter, that you dare to disturb me in the exercise of my functions?" demanded the beadle.

"The matter is, M. Bazin," said Friquet, "that M. Maillard, whom you know very well, — the giver of holy water at Saint Eustache"—

"Well, what then?"

"Well, he has received a blow on the head, with a sword, in the tumult. That great giant you see there, with embroidery all over his seams, gave it him."

"Yes? In that case he must be in a very bad state," said Bazin.

"So much so that he is dying, and he would like, before he dies, to confess to the coadjutor, who has the power, it is said, of forgiving great sins."

"And does he fancy that the coadjutor will put himself out of the way for him?"

"Yes, certainly; for it seems that the coadjutor promised him to do so."

"And who told you this?"

"M. Maillard himself."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Certainly; I was there when he fell."

"And what were you doing there?"

"I was crying out 'Down with Mazarin!' 'Death to the Cardinal!' 'To the gallows with the Italian!' Was not that what you told me to bawl out?"

"Will you hold your tongue, you little rascal!" said Bazin, looking anxiously around him.

"So that that poor M. Maillard said to me: 'Go for the coadjutor, Friquet; and if you bring him to me, I will make you my heir.' Think, then, Father Bazin, — the heir of M. Maillard, the distributor of holy water of Saint Eustache! *Faith, I shall* have nothing more to do than cross my arms!

Never mind, I would nevertheless render him this service; what do you say to it?"

"I will go and inform the coadjutor," said Bazin; and he went softly and respectfully up to the prelate, said some words into his ear, to which he answered by an affirmative; and then, returning as softly as he had gone, he said:

"Go and tell the dying man to wait patiently; his Excellence will be with him in an hour."

"Good!" said Friquet; "my fortune is made."

"By the way," said Bazin, "where did he have them carry him?"

"To the tower of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie."

And, enchanted at the success of his embassy, Friquet, without taking off his chorister's dress, which, moreover, gave him a greater facility of getting about, hurried from the cathedral, and took the road to the tower of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie as fast as he could.

As soon as the *Te Deum* was finished the coadjutor, as he had promised, and without even putting off his priestly robes, proceeded toward the old tower that he knew so well.

He arrived in time. Although growing momentarily weaker and weaker, the wounded man was not yet dead.

The door was opened for him into the room where the medicant was in the last agonies.

A minute after, Friquet came out, holding a large leathern bag in his hand, which he opened the moment he was outside the room, and which, to his utter astonishment, he found to be full of gold.

The mendicant had kept his word, and had made him his heir.

"Ah, Mother Nannette!" screamed out Friquet, almost suffocated, — "ah, Mother Nannette!"

He could say no more; but the strength which failed him in speech left him the power of action. He began running desperately homeward; and like the Greek of Marathon falling on the square at Athens with his laurel in his hand, Friquet reached the threshold of the Councillor Broussel, and on reaching it fell down, scattering on the carpet the louis-d'or which rolled out of the bag.

Mother Nannette first picked up the louis, and then she picked up Friquet.

In the meantime the grand procession was entering the Palais Royal.

"That M. d'Artagnan is a very valiant man, my mother," said the young King.

"Yes, my son, and he did your father good service. Make much of him for the future."

"Monsieur le Capitaine," said the young King to D'Artagnan, as he got out of his carriage, "Madame the Queen desires me to invite you, and your friend, the Baron du Vallon, to dinner to-day."

This was a great honour for D'Artagnan and Porthos, and Porthos was quite transported. Nevertheless, throughout the whole of the repast the worthy gentleman appeared to have his mind greatly preoccupied.

"But what was the matter with you, Baron?" asked D'Artagnan, as they descended the staircase of the Palais Royal; "you looked greatly worried during the dinner!"

"I was trying to find out," said Porthos, "where in the world I had seen that mendicant whom I must have killed."

"And you could not manage it?"

"No."

"Well, then, try and find it out, my friend; and when you have discovered it, you will tell me, will you not?"

"Pardieu!" said Porthos.

CHAPTER XCVIII.

CONCLUSION.

On returning home the two friends found a letter from Athos, making an appointment with them at the Grand-Charlemagne for the next morning.

They both went to bed early, but neither of them could sleep. It is impossible to obtain the object of all your desires, without its having the effect of driving away sleep, at least for the first night.

The next day, at the hour appointed, they went to Athos's apartment, where they found the Count and Aramis in travelling dresses.

"Well," said Porthos, "so we are all going, are we? I also have packed up my luggage this morning."

"Oh, mon Dieu! yes," said Aramis; "there is nothing more

to do in Paris, since the Fronde no longer exists. Madame de Longueville has invited me to pass a few days in Normandy, and has commissioned me, while her son is baptised to go and secure lodgings for her in Rouen. I am going to perform this commission; and then, should nothing new happen, I shall go and bury myself again in the convent at Notre-Dame."

"And I," said Athos, "am going back to Bragelonne. You know well enough, my dear D'Artagnan, that I am no longer anything more than a good and honest countryman. Raoul has no other fortune than my own, poor boy! and I must go and take care of it, since I am in some sort only a tenant for life."

"And what do you mean to do with Raoul?"

"I leave him with you, my friend. There is going to be a campaign in Flanders, and you will take him with you. I fear that a sojourn at Blois might be dangerous to his young head. Take him with you, then, and teach him to be as brave and as loyal as yourself."

"And as for me," said D'Artagnan, "I shall no longer have you with me, Athos; but I shall have this dear fair-haired boy; and although he is but a child, as your soul completely revives in him I shall always fancy that you are with me, accompanying and supporting me."

The four friends embraced, with tears in their eyes.

Then they separated, without knowing whether they should ever meet again.

D'Artagnan returned to the Rue Tiquetonne with Porthos, who was still meditating, and constantly trying to recollect who the man was whom he had killed. On coming opposite the Hôtel de la Chevrette, they saw the baron's equipage ready and Mousqueton in the saddle.

"Come, D'Artagnan," said Porthos, "leave the sword, and live with me at Pierrefonds, at Bracieux, or at le Vallon; we will grow old together in talking of our comrades."

"No," said D'Artagnan; "Peste! they are just going to open the campaign, and I must be there. I hope to gain something."

"And what, pray, do you hope to become?"

"A marshal of France, pardieu!"

"Aha!" said Porthos, looking at D'Artagnan, whose gasconades he could never thoroughly understand.

"Come with me, Porthos," said D'Artagnan; "I will
you a duke."

"No," said Porthos, "Mouston does not wish for any more campaigns. Besides, they have arranged a solemn entrance for me into my estate, which will make all my neighbours burst with envy."

"That being the case, I have nothing more to say," replied D'Artagnan, who knew the new baron's vanity. "Au revoir, then, my friend."

"Au revoir, my dear captain," said Porthos. "You know that when you wish to see me, you will be always most welcome in my barony."

"Yes," said D'Artagnan, "on my return from the campaign I will come down."

"The baron's equipages await him," said Mousqueton.

And the two friends separated, after shaking hands. D'Artagnan remained at the door, watching with a melancholy eye the departure of Porthos.

But at the end of twenty paces Porthos pulled up short, struck his hand against his forehead, and returned.

"I remember now," said he.

"What?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Who that mendicant was that I slew."

"Ah, really? And who was he?"

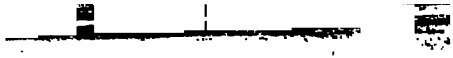
"It was that dog of a Bonacieux."

And Porthos, delighted at having his mind free, rejoined Mousqueton, with whom he disappeared round the corner of the street.

D'Artagnan remained pensive and motionless for a minute. Then turning round he saw the fair Madeline standing at the threshold, in some disquietude on account of his recent exaltation.

"Madeline," said the Gascon, "give me the apartment on the first floor. I must make some show, now that I am Captain of the Musketeers. But still keep the chamber in the fifth story vacant for me. There is no knowing what may happen."

THE END.



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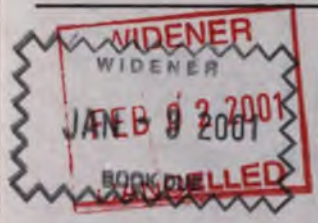
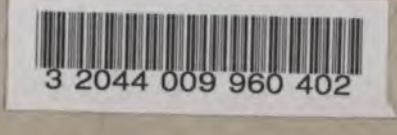
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